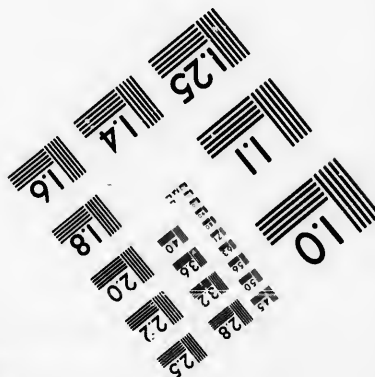


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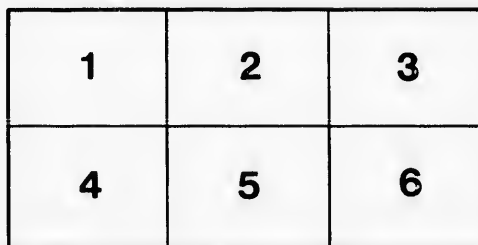
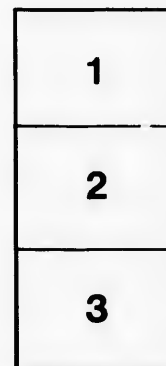
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LETTERS  
TO THE  
WESLEYAN METHODISTS  
OF THE  
MISSION OF MONO.

BY THE  
REV. JOHN FLETCHER, A. B.

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SECOND EDITION.

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TORONTO:  
HENRY ROWSELL, KING STREET.  
1854.

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## LETTERS, &c.

### LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

I have often desired an opportunity of addressing you at large upon the numerous objections which are raised by members of your society against the Church, of which most of you have been baptized members; but this opportunity I have never been able to obtain. I have anxiously looked for the attendance of a greater number of those who call themselves Methodists at the ordinances of the Lord's house, but have looked for it in vain. I have indeed seen members of various dissenting denominations attend the house of God in the different Churches and Stations under my pastoral charge, but have noticed with very few exceptions the absence of the members of your society. I have occasionally had intercourse with some of you, and have endeavoured to shew you the difference that exists between the present practice of your society and the practice and expressed wish of your Founder; but, as I might reasonably suppose from my inability to support my assertions by a direct reference to his writings when they were not exactly within my reach, have not succeeded in convincing you of this difference to the extent of my wishes. I have consequently thought it necessary to take this method of procuring a hearing from you; and by taking such extracts from Mr. Wesley's works as bear upon the subject of your differences from the Church, as well as from himself, and by making use of such other arguments as with the blessing of God may show you the injurious consequences of your unnecessary separation from the Church of your Fathers, to wash my hands from blood-guiltiness, at least in your cases, if you should still pertinaciously persist in a course of schism contrary alike to the Book of God, the writings of the first teachers of Christianity, and the practice of John Wesley.

But you may naturally enquire, why I address myself to you, and do not turn my attention to some other of the thousand and one sects which take upon them the name of Christ, and which are continually engaged in biting and devouring one another, as well as in carping at the dogmas and discipline of the Church.

To this question I shall briefly answer :

1. The errors of some, if not of most of these sects, shall naturally be brought under review in the following pages, when I shall come to speak upon the subject of church authority. I therefore think it inexpedient to address others, when in doing so, I would be compelled to pass by unnoticed the peculiar practices of your society.

2. The great majority of the members of your society have been originally members of the Church, or are at least the children of persons who have been in church fellowship. Seeing therefore their



withdrawal from the fold, and knowing that there is no valid reason why they should forsake it, as the Pastor to whom is committed the spiritual oversight of the flock of God in this neighbourhood, I naturally sigh over their defection and desire their restoration.

3. Having been in Ireland in the year 1834, at the time when the census was taken, I cannot forget that the members of both the Methodist societies (the Primitive and the Wesleyan) were put down in the census rolls, without exception, as members of the Church; and having since that time heard that a Methodist Preacher (Dr. Alder) who had been on various occasions President of the Conference, had declared on oath before a Committee of the House of Lords that "the Methodist Society was a branch of the Church of England all over the world," I could not but be astonished when I reached Canada to find that the facts of the case were, at least in this colony, diametrically opposite to this assertion; and that the society which in 1834, to my own knowledge, was declared to be part and parcel of the Church of England, was here among her most determined enemies, and united with any class of dissent which would call for her entire demolition.

4. I have occasionally in my public discourses, and in my private intercourse with members of your society, given expression to my views upon those subjects, as I hoped with that clearness and simplicity of language which I endeavour at all times to cultivate; but have found that my expressions have been perverted (through the blindness of ignorance or the influence of prejudice) to the opposite meaning to that which I intended they should bear; and knowing the baneful effects of prejudice or ignorance, I think it advisable to address myself to you in a manner which cannot be misunderstood, and which will not need the vehicle of common report to bring it within your reach, but may be studied in your closets and examined into at your leisure.

In examining the following pages, I must request you will do it with the candour which I intend to make use of in penning them. The scriptural direction is, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." I shall endeavour to assist you in this duty by bringing forward proofs from Wesley's works to support the following assertion, that the objections to the Church which are commonly held by you were not held by your Founder, and that consequently Methodism in Mono, and I suppose in the whole of Canada, is not the Methodism of John Wesley.

The edition from which I quote is entitled, "The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M., sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. Third edition, with the last corrections of the author. London: published by John Mason, 14, City Road, and sold at 66, Paternoster Row. 1830." As Methodists, who have in your hands the Wesleyan Hymn Book, you will at once perceive that the place of publication will guarantee the genuineness of the work; and if any of you doubt the correctness of my quotations, I shall feel pleasure at any time in comparing them with the work from which they are extracted.

I must also observe, that by the term Methodism I invariably mean the Methodism of the ordinary members of your society—I

know not the opinion of your Preachers—I never came into contact with any of them, and therefore would not assert that the objections which have been raised against the Church by some of you are held by them; but as it is only natural to suppose that preachers and people think the same, I may reasonably consider that what you openly avow is known to them, and the principle of christian charity compels me to think that they would not permit you to hold views contrary to what they believe to be true without making some efforts to set you right.

A very common objection to the Church, but an objection so palpably false that a mere denial of it should be a sufficient refutation, is that “the Church is semi-Roman”—in what respect? “Oh,” (say some of you) “as regards doctrine and practice, you teach subjects which are taught in common with you by the Roman Catholic, and you perform acts which they also perform.” We do, and strange to say, so do the Methodists. The Romanist believes in the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity—of the incarnation and sufferings of the Lord Jesus—of his ascension to heaven, and continuance in glory—of the resurrection of the dead, and of judgment to come,—so do we, and so do the Methodists. We hold what is Roman, as Catholic and Apostolic, but we reject what is Popish, as “superstitious, damnable, and idolatrous”—and are we to reject what the Church Universal now believes and has always believed, because a fallen Church receives it? “But you make use of certain practices which are used by the Romanist”—but here too the Methodist and the Romanist also agree; the Romanist and the Churchman both kneel at the reception of the Lord’s Supper, and while different other dissenting bodies reject this practice as Popish and idolatrous the Methodists adopt it without the slightest apology for the practice, and even without the reasonable explanation of it given by the Church; so that to the Methodist who charges us with being semi-Popish, we may at once retort, the charge is equally valid against you as against us—that is, in this respect, without the slightest force. “But we have been informed on good authority that some of your ministers in this colony have latterly adopted in their Churches the Popish practice of burning candles at mid-day during the time of divine service.” I know not whether I should extend the greatest degree of pity to the individual who would dare in the sight of God to slander and vilify his Church, or to his unfortunate dupes who gladly catch at and believe any falsehood that may reach their ears; but to this assertion I must give the most positive contradiction—the same charge was, as one of yourselves told me, made against myself, and was, as you are well aware, without the slightest shadow of truth. The Church does not enjoin the burning of candles during mid-day service—during evening service, when required, they are used: probably the originator of this report happened to stray into a Church during the performance of evening service, and finding the candles lighted at a time when Methodist chapels would be verging towards Egyptian darkness from a disinclination on the part of the stewards or leaders to waste their funds by lighting their candles too soon, might mistake the reason, and think that what was designed to prevent confusion during the performance of divine ser-

vice was a Popish innovation; or possibly, as happened at one time in a Church in which I was officiating, the usual darkness of the Christmas season, increased by extra storms, might prevent the minister even at mid-day from reading the communion service without the assistance of artificial light, and compel him to have lights brought to the chancel to enable him to do so, which if seen by this individual or others of the same stamp, would form a most excellent foundation for a report of the Popish innovations that had been introduced into the Church.

But, granting that it may be possible that some of the Clergymen of our Church were disposed to look with favor upon points of which the majority of their brethren disapprove, and attempt to introduce into their respective Churches the genuflexions, and the crossings, and other useless forms of the Church before the Reformation, do their mal-practices prove that the Church herself is verging towards Popery? Certainly not—no more than the drunkenness of one Methodist Preacher, or the horse-dealing propensities of another, would prove that the Methodist Conference consisted of drunkards or black-coated dealers in horse-flesh.

“But do you not hold the Popish doctrine of priestly absolution; and do not your ministers take upon themselves the authority of forgiving sin?” No, we do not; true, there are in our book of Common Prayer three forms of absolution, but these are not considered as intended to remove the guilt of sin, but as removing church censures from the penitent, or at most as declaring authoritatively God’s willingness to accept and to forgive the returning sinner. The Popish notion of absolution is, that it is judicial and positive—that without the intervention of priestly absolution God does not forgive sin, and that after the administration of the right, the recipient of it is as free from sin as the recently baptized infant. The views of the Church on the removal of sin are clearly expressed in the following language, with which she addresses God in her communion service: “Thy property is always to have mercy; to THEE ONLY it appertaineth to forgive sin.”

The doctrine of the Church with regard to clerical absolution may be learned from the following extracts from works which we are required to study previous to our divinity or ordination examinations.

“Upon such a repentance sincerely begun and honestly pursued, we do in general, as herald’s of God’s mercy, and the ministers of his gospel, pronounce to our people daily the offers that are made us of mercy and pardon by Christ Jesus. This we do in our daily service, and in a more peculiar manner before we go to the holy communion. We do also, as we are a body that may be offended with the sins of others, forgive the scandals committed against the Church,—that such as we think are in a state of repentance may die in the full peace of the church, we join both absolutions in one in the last office, likewise praying to our Saviour that he would forgive them; and then we, as the officers of the church, authorized for that end, do forgive all the offences and scandals committed by them against the whole body.”—*Bishop Burnet on the 39 Articles, Art. 25.*

“Whether the church designs by this form” (the Absolution in the Visitation of the Sick) “that the Priest shall directly convey

God's pardon to the conscience of the sinner for his sins and offences committed against him; or whether that he shall only remit the censures of the church and continue him in the privilege of church communion, which he may be supposed to have forfeited by the sins he has confessed, is thought by some not to be clearly or determinedly expressed. But if we look forward to the *Collect* immediately after to be used, it looks as if the church did only intend the remission of ecclesiastical censures and bonds; for in that prayer the penitent is said still *most earnestly to desire pardon and forgiveness*, which surely there would be no occasion to do if he had been actually pardoned and forgiven by God by virtue of the absolution pronounced before; again, the Priest offers a special request that God would *preserve and continue him in the unity of the Church*, which seems to suppose that the foregoing absolution had been pronounced in order to restore him to its peace; and therefore, since the form will bear this sense without straining or putting any force upon the words, I hope it will be no offence to interpret them so as is most consistent with the original commission given by our Lord, and the exercise of it in the purest ages of the church."—*Wheatley on the Common Prayer, chap. 19, sec. 5.*

In the foregoing extracts the views of the church are distinctly shewn to be, that the absolution of the Priest, when referred to sins against God, is merely declarative of God's willingness to receive penitent sinners; but when referred to sins against the church, is judicial, removing church censures, and the punishment consequent upon them, and re-admitting the penitent to the full enjoyment of church privileges; and is not this latter course followed by every denomination of professing Christians, without any offence being taken at it? Does not the Presbyterian Church of Scotland impose penances upon her offending members, and at their repentance restore them to church privileges? Does not the Society of Friends disown from membership persons who have transgressed their rules, and upon receiving letters of condemnation restore the offending members? Nay, more, does not your own society exercise the discipline which the church lays claim to, and receive into connection with it persons desirous of joining it, or reject those who act in a manner contrary to its rules? It certainly was its primitive practice to *read out* the names of offending members and to state publicly that such persons were no longer in the society. I believe that this practice has long fallen into disuse; but yet, is not the power of writing down the names of persons in your class-book, and thus constituting them Methodists, and the power of erasing their names when these persons do not act in accordance with your principles, and again, the restoration of these latter individuals upon their repentance, tantamount to the power of excommunication, or of absolution laid claim to by the Church.

With regard to the declarative nature of the absolution of the

\* As it has been said that I am incorrect in the above statement, I refer those who desire further information on that point to an Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, passed April 18th, 1707, session 11, chaps. 8 & 9, entitled "Concerning processes in order to the censure of the greater excommunication, and concerning the order of proceeding to absolution."

church, for sins committed against God, I suppose the following quotations from the theological dictionary of Richard Watson, a Methodist Preacher, whose writings are highly approved of by your Society, and from the works of your Founder, will have greater weight with you than even the opinions of the Bishops and other divines, from whose works I have quoted :—"The right of absolution in the Church of England is acknowledged to be declarative only. 'Almighty God hath given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people being penitent the absolution and remission of their sins, He pardoneth,' &c. In this view it is innocent, and although any private christian has right to declare and pronounce the same doctrine to his neighbour, the official publication of the grace of the gospel is the public duty of its minister in the congregation, since they are Christ's ambassadors."—*Watson's Dictionary, Art. Absolution.*

"They" (the Roman Catholics) go on, "The sentence pronounced by the priest in absolution is pronounced by the Judge himself. All the sins of the sinner are already pardoned, and an entrance opened into heaven. We cannot allow it. *We believe the absolution pronounced by the Priest is only declarative and conditional.* For judicially to pardon sins and absolve the sinner is a power God has reserved to himself."—*Popery Calmly Considered, vol. 10, p. 153.*

I would advise those persons who are in the habit of giving utterance to the ridiculous charge against the church, "that she is rapidly growing downwards on the road to Popery," to weigh their words well before they give expression to them, since slandering the church of God is as much an abomination in the sight of Him with whom we have to do as backbiting individuals, and for this sin as well as for every other idle and evil word, they shall have to give an account at the day of judgment. I would also recommend them to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the opinions of him whose name they profess to bear, before they make charges which on examination will be found to be not only against the church, but against their own Founder, as is the case with regard to the subject now under consideration, and will be shewn to be the case also in many other subjects which we shall shortly consider.

Another of your Society tells me "he cannot go to church, because if he did so he would be disobeying a plain command of God, 'Thou shalt not go with the multitude to do evil.'" I must acknowledge that I scarcely gave credit to my own ears when this answer was made to me, that a man, who calls himself a Wesleyan, who was baptized in the church, who sat for years under her ministry, could so forget the obligation he was under to her, could be so extremely ignorant of the principles of Wesley, of the very rules of his own Society, which require him to attend upon the ministry of the Word, and of the rules of the Methodist Band-societies that direct him to be at church every Lord's Day, as to say that attending divine service in the church of his fathers was going with the multitude to do evil; in fact, I would pass by this reason as so extremely foolish as not to deserve an answer, did I not think that ignorance of every description should be counteracted by correspondent instruction, and also that the simplicity of one individual might influence him to

give expression to a sentiment which may be held by others, who through superior tact would conceal their true objection and shelter themselves behind others of a far different nature; but wherein consists this going with the multitude to do evil consequent upon attending the church? Not in the prayers of the church—not in the sermon of her minister; but in this, that after service the Sabbath is profaned by some of the members of the congregation immediately falling into conversation upon the weather, or crops, or politics, or some other subject improper for the Sabbath; but *if this be the case*, is it encouraged by the church or her ministers? Do we not Sabbath after Sabbath declare to the people that they should “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy?” And will the Methodist inform me *by what sect* is this commandment stately proclaimed? Has he ever heard it in any of the Methodist chapels or other places of service which he may have been in the habit of attending, except, perhaps, in some where Mr. Wesley’s old rule of reading the church service is still continued; but I would ask is this practice confined to members of the church? are there not in all congregations persons whose hearts are not under the influence of divine grace, and who, thinking the worship of God a weariness of the flesh, endeavour as much as possible to forget the solemnities of divine worship, and enter upon any conversation which may have the effect of removing them from their minds? Is the Methodist himself free from the charge of profaning the Sabbath by light and trifling, and vain conversation? Are all those whose names are upon Methodist class-books *free from this and other sins* equally offensive in the sight of a pure and holy God? But, once more: though all others should indulge in this practice, is there any necessity imposed upon you that you should do the same? Cannot you return with your families from the house of God to your own residences and converse with them upon the subjects which have been brought before you, and thus endeavour to obtain for yourselves a full answer to the prayer which the minister and congregation had united in offering up at the close of the service, “that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears may through thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of Thy name.” Persons who make such an objection as this should first weigh themselves in the balance of the sanctuary, before they pass such a sweeping condemnation upon the majority of the members of a church, which in influence, in usefulness, and in religious activity, at this moment stands at the head of every christian society, and should at the same time seriously reflect upon the necessity of the grace of christian humility, lest from an over-weening opinion of their own spiritual advantages, they may be falling unawares into the snare of the devil, while they are giving way to spiritual pride, and saying to others, “Stand by yourselves, we are holier than you.”

A third objection to attendance upon divine service is, that our Book of Common Prayer is a mere Act of Parliament. Surely the persons who make use of this excuse must be at an extreme loss for an argument against the Church of their fathers, when they are compelled to descend into the company of Romanists to obtain one



—for the objection now under consideration has been, as far as I can learn, hitherto held by none but Romanists. In addressing you as Methodists, I think it unnecessary to make any observation upon the principle on which this objection is based, "that the Reformation itself was brought about by the Parliament"; inasmuch as this is an opinion which I cannot discover that any of you have entertained, but as it is ordinarily supposed by ignorant persons that our Prayer Book had its origin at the time of the Reformation—and as you yourselves, or at least such of you as make use of this objection—are in the habit of thinking that it was then composed, I shall take a brief survey of its history, and of the part which the English Parliament took with respect to it, and shall afterwards show the estimation in which it was held by your Founder, and the regulations he made at different times and places, regarding its use in your Society.

Christianity had been planted in Britain, according to the opinion of Ecclesiastical historians, during the lifetime of some of the Apostles, or at least of their immediate successors—and continued to be the religion of the country for several centuries—but when Roman protection was withdrawn from its inhabitants, and they were left in a state of independence, they were unable single-handed to withstand the more powerful inhabitants of Scotland; and were compelled to apply for assistance to the Saxons, a warlike German nation; succours were accordingly sent, and their enemies were defeated, and compelled to confine themselves within their own borders; but instead of withdrawing to their own country at the completion of the deliverance which they had effected, the Saxons turned round upon the defenceless Britons, and reduced them to subjection; and as they were Pagan idolaters, they destroyed the churches, and slaughtered the Christian inhabitants, or compelled them to retire into the fastnesses of Wales and Cornwall.

Such was the condition of England at the time of Gregory I., Bishop of Rome, who was influenced by the Spirit of God to make an attempt to convert the Pagan Saxons; and to effect this object, sent Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury, with several assistants, into that country, in the year 596. We must not suppose, because they were sent by a Roman Bishop, that therefore they were Papists, for at that time Popery had no existence—true, superstition and error were germinating in the Church, but idolatry, spiritual tyranny, and the doctrine of the merit of works, the three discriminating doctrines of the Papacy, had as yet no settled establishment at Rome. On the arrival of Augustine in England, he found the British Bishops made use of a Liturgy of their own, different from that which was then in use in Rome—he accordingly enquired from Gregory whether he should introduce the Roman, or permit the continuance of the British Liturgy, and received the following answer:—"That he was not bound to follow the precedent of Rome, but might select whatever parts or rules appeared the most eligible, and best adapted to promote the piety of the infant Church of England, and compose them into a system for its use"—but, as Augustine was unsuccessful in effecting a union between the British Bishops and those who co-operated with himself, he introduced the Sacramentary

of Gregory, a revision of the ancient Liturgy which was then in use in the Western Church.

This service-book formed the basis of those which were used in the Church in England for several centuries; but as each Bishop had authority to make alterations in it for his own diocese, there were various editions of it in use at the time, differing in minor particulars, but still agreeing in the principal points. As error and superstition increased, alterations of greater moment were made in it; the new dogmas of Rome required a notice in the Service-book, and, accordingly, the prayers which before were made through the intercession of Jesus alone, were now made in conjunction with the Saints; prayers were offered to the Virgin, to the Apostles, and to other Saints—and the service which for centuries had been performed in the Vernacular tongue was now performed in Latin, in conformity with the orders of Pope Gregory the 7th, so that by degrees the pure prayers of the original Sacramentary became so altered and corrupted that they could scarcely be known to have been derived from such a source.

We thus see, that although the original of our Prayer Book was pure, yet that it gradually accommodated itself to the dangerous errors which had crept into the Church of Rome; and as these were embodied in it by the laws of the land, and by the laws of the church, they could not be removed without a reference to the same authorities; accordingly in the year 1537 the *Convocation* of the English Church, being desirous to effect reformation in it, appointed a Committee to compose a book, which was called "*The Godly and pious institution of a Christian,*" which under different names passed through several editions, and was, (as the preface expresses it) "*set furthe by the King, with the advyse of his Clergy, the Lordes bothe spirituall and temporall, with the nether House of Parliament, having bothe sene and lyked it very well.*"

In the year 1540, a *Committee of Bishops* was, at the petition of the *Convocation*, appointed to reform the rituals of the Church; the result of which was, that the prayers for processions and litanies were ordered by the *King and his Clergy* to be put into English and publicly used.

In the year 1547, the *Convocation* declared their opinion that the *Communion* ought to be administered in both kinds, whereupon an Act of Parliament was passed ordering the *Communion* to be administered. In the same year a Committee was appointed to compose an uniform order of *Communion*, according to the rules of scripture and the use of the Primitive Church, which was published with the *King's* proclamation, enjoining the use of it. Again, in the same year, a new Commission was addressed to the same Divines, directing them to prepare a complete collection of Divine offices for public worship, who accordingly drew up the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was presented to *Convocation*, and having received the approbation of the Archbishops, Bishops and Clergy of both the provinces of Canterbury and York, was ratified by Act of Parliament in the January following.

At the suggestion of some foreign divines, this book was again revised in the year 1551, and the alterations then made were



approved of by Parliament in the following year, who declared that they proceeded from curiosity rather than any worthy cause.

In the following reign there was a return to the darkness of Popery; the reformations which had been in part effected in the two preceding reigns were, during the reign of Mary, entirely put a stop to, and Acts of Parliament passed, restoring Popery in all its deformity; but upon her death a fresh Commission was appointed by Elizabeth to review the Books of Common Prayer published in the reign of Edward, and from them to frame another for the use of the Church; the Commissioners, who were all divines, presented the book which they had prepared to Parliament, who accordingly passed a law enjoining its use.

Some further alterations were made in the Prayer Book in the reign of James I., but as they were of trifling importance, I shall proceed to the reign of his grandson, Charles II., who shortly after the Restoration, in consequence of objections made by Dissenters, appointed a Commission to revise it once more, by whom it was brought to the state in which we now have it; and *after it had received the subscriptions of both Houses of Convocation*, it obtained the sanction of Parliament, and the High Chancellor of England was ordered to return the thanks of the Lords to the Bishops and Clergy of both provinces for the great care and industry shewn in the review of it.

Thus, "it appears by the proceedings observed in the reformation of the service of the Church, that this reformation was regularly made by the Bishops and Clergy in their provincial Synods, the King and Parliament only establishing by the *civil sanction* what was there done by ecclesiastical authority. It was indeed, (as my Lord Bishop of Sarum has excellently well observed) confirmed by the authority of Parliament,—and there was good reason to desire that to give it the force of a law but the authority of [the book, and] those changes is wholly to be derived from the Convocation, who only consulted about them, and made them. And the Parliament did take that care in the enacting them, that they might show they did only add the force of a law to them, for in passing them it was ordered that the Book of Common Prayer and Ordination should only be read over (and even that was carried upon some debate,—for many, as I have been told, moved that the book should be added to the Act as it was sent to the Parliament from the Convocation, without ever reading it, but that seemed indecent and too implicit to others,) and there was no change made in a title by Parliament, *so that they only enacted by a law what the Convocation had done.*"—*Wheatley on the Book of Common Prayer.*

But probably the opinions of John Wesley on this subject may have greater weight with you than the foregoing account, and the declaration of one of our Bishops. In a letter to the Rev. Mr. Toogood, of Exeter, occasioned by his "Dissent from the Church of England fully justified," he thus writes:—"The controversy turns upon one single point. Has the Church power to decree rites and ceremonies? \* \* \* \* You say—secondly, the persons who have this power in England are not the Clergy, but the Parliament.

Perhaps so. But this also strikes wide—where is ‘the express command of Christ?’” \* \* \* \*

“Another plain command is that mentioned but now, ‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.’ And this we shall think ourselves fully authorised to do, in things of a religious as well as a civil nature, till you can produce plain explicit proof from scripture that we must submit in the latter, but not in the former. We cannot find any such distinction in the Bible, and till we find it there we cannot receive it, but must believe our allegiance to Christ requires submission to our governors in all things indifferent.”

“*This I speak even on supposition, that the things in question were enjoined merely by the King and Parliament. If they were, what then? Then I would submit to them for the Lord’s sake.*”

The following extracts show the estimation in which the Book of Common Prayer was held by your Founder:—“If it be said ‘at the Church we are fed with chaff, whereas at the meeting we have wholesome food,’ we answer, the prayers of the Church are not chaff, *they are substantial food for any who is alive to God.*”—Works, vol. 13, p. 197. “It appears to me that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation”—vol. 5, p. 499. “I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England; *I love her Liturgy*”—vol. 7, p. 278. “I believe there is no Liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety, than the Common Prayers of the Church of England. And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than 200 years ago (1784), yet is the language of it not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.”—vol. 14, p. 317.

But I might give you another piece of information, of which probably the greatest part of you are ignorant. Mr. Wesley not only approved of the Book of Common Prayer, but also enjoined its use in his Chapels; as proof of this assertion I shall refer to the following passages:—“I have prepared a Liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England, (I think the best constituted national Church in the world), which I advise all the Travelling Preachers to use on the Lord’s Day in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days.”—Vol. 13, p. 219. “We advise every one who preaches in the Church hours to read the Psalms and Lessons with part of the Church Prayers, because we apprehend this will endear the Church Service to our brethren, who probably would be prejudiced against it if they heard none but extemporary prayer.”—Vol. 13, p. 224.

Let me ask you is this course followed in Mono, where your services are held during church hours, or can any of you mention a single station in British North America in which the Liturgy or the Litany, or even the Psalms and Lessons appointed by the Church, are read? You cannot. “Extemporaneous prayer is everywhere used to the exclusion of the Book of Common Prayer, and hence has arisen your disregard for forms, and your attachment to prayers composed frequently by men who cannot express themselves grammatically, but who make up for their deficiency in learning by a

b'asphemous familiarity with the Divine Being,\* and who think that they can only be heard by loud as well as by long speaking, and from a knowledge of the inexpressible distance between their incoherent addresses and the simple and beautiful language of the Liturgy, endeavour to defend themselves by taking shelter behind the Popish objection that the Liturgy is a mere act of Parliament.

But, say some others, "We cannot attend Church Service; the appointments for preaching at our Chapel or for Class-meeting are at the same hour as the Church Service; we cannot attend both, and think it our duty to be present at class or preaching."

This is one of those many points in which I think your practice is most diametrically opposed to that of your Founder, for he would not permit your services to be held during Church hours; but not to make mere assertions as to what I consider to have been his opinions, I shall give you his own words: "Wherever there is any Church Service, I do not approve of any appointment the same hour, because I love the Church of England, and would assist, not oppose it, all I can."—Vol. 13, page 55, date 1786. "Exhort all that were brought up in the church to continue therein—set the example yourself, and immediately change every plan that would hinder their being at church at least two Sundays in four; carefully avoid whatever has a tendency to separate men from the church, and let all the servants in our Preaching-houses go to church once on Sunday at least."—Vol. 8, page 321. "Saturday, 5th April, 1755, I preached at Wednesbury, and at eight on Sunday. But the great congregation assembled in the afternoon, as soon as the service of the church was over, *with which we take care never to interfere*."—Vol. 2, page 324. Friday, 14th Oct., 1763—"On Friday evening I read to them all the rules of the Society, adding: 'Those who are resolved to keep these rules may continue with us, and those only.' I then related what I had done since I came to Norwich first, and what I would do for the time to come, *particularly that I would put a stop to preaching in the time of Church Service*."—Vol. 3, page 152. With these passages before me, how can I think that persons who do not obey the directions of Wesley can be Wesleyans, that those who hold their services universally during church hours, can be genuine disciples of him whose name they bear?

Before proceeding further, let me request that you will pause and seriously weigh the objections that I have considered, with the answers I have made to them, and should you not have perceived the force of these answers, read this letter over a second time; for I have no hesitation in asserting, that if your minds are not blinded by prejudice, but are really desirous of acquiring the truth, you will, from

\* I have been very severely censured for the above expression; but those who censure me should pause before doing so, lest the sword by which they pierce me should, through me, wound John Wesley. The following passage will show whether his views and mine coincide or not on that subject:—He is speaking upon the use of the words "Dear Lord" or "Dear Saviour" in prayer, and thus asks: "Is not this using too much familiarity with the great Lord of heaven and earth? Is there any scripture, any passage either in the Old or New Testament which justifies this manner of speaking?" \* \* Do we not frequently use this unscriptural expression concerning our blessed Lord, in private conversation also? \* \* \* \* We do well to be cautious in this matter.'—Works, Vol. 7, p. 294.

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the proofs I have adduced, at once acknowledge that at least on the points considered, the present practice of Methodists is not agreeable to the practice enjoined by Wesley. My next letter shall take under review objections to the mode of administering the Sacrament of Baptism, and to the grace conferred in it; and also those general objections to the Church which spring from an erroneous view of your religious position and so called Ecclesiastical polity.

I am, my dear friends,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

JOHN FLETCHER.

Mono, September, 1852.

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—

The first of the objections referred to at the conclusion of my last letter is, that we require Sponsors in the administration of Baptism. Without examining into the origin of this custom—which I consider to have had an existence in the Apostolic times—I shall refer you on this subject, as Methodists, to the opinions of your Founder:—"I enquire not, whether in the administrations of baptism you agree with me in *admitting sureties for the baptized*."—Sermon on the Catholic Spirit, vol. 5, p. 497. This sermon is one of those which your Preachers acknowledge previous to their admission into full connexion with your Conference as containing their own views on doctrinal subjects; how is it then that they NEVER *admit sureties for the baptized*? Again, Mr. Wesley wrote a tract entitled, "Serious thoughts concerning Godfathers and Godmothers." I suppose this has never been seen by any of you, and as it very nearly expresses my own views on the subject, I shall subjoin it without comment, for I think his language will have more weight with you than my own.

"In the ancient church, when baptism was administered, there were two or more sponsors (as Tertullian calls them, an hundred years after the death of St. John) for every person to be baptized. As these were witnesses before God and the Church of the solemn engagement those persons then entered into, so they undertook (as the very word implies) to watch over those souls in a peculiar manner, to instruct, admonish, exhort, and build them up in the faith once delivered to the Saints; these were considered as a kind of spiritual parents to be baptized, whether they were infants or at man's estate, and were expected to supply whatever spiritual helps were wanting, either through the death or neglect of the natural parents."

2. "These have been retained in the Catholic Church from the earliest times, as the reason for them was the same at all ages; in our church they are termed by a proper and expressive name, godfathers and godmothers. And it is appointed 'that there shall be for every male child to be baptized two godfathers and one godmother, and for every female one godfather and two godmothers.'

3. "But it is objected against these, 1st, that there is no mention of godfathers and godmothers in Scripture; 2ndly, that many undertake this without ever considering what they undertake or once seriously thinking how to perform it. And, 3rdly, that no serious man would undertake it, because it is impossible to perform it.

4. "I answer, first, it is undoubtedly true, godfathers and godmothers are not mentioned in scripture, and therefore it cannot be said they are absolutely necessary, or that baptism cannot be administered without them. But yet it may be said they are highly expedient, for when they are prudently chosen they may be of unspeakable use to the persons baptized and a great relief and comfort to the parents of them.

5. "I answer, secondly, it is too true that many undertake this solemn office without ever considering what they undertake; giddy, ignorant persons, if not openly vicious, who never once seriously think how to perform it; but whose fault is it? It is not the fault of the church, which carefully guards against the very thing, by ordering 'that none but communicants be admitted to be godfathers or godmothers.' Now, communicants we may presume to be serious persons, who will both consider and perform what they undertake. It is altogether the fault of those foolish parents who will on any account whatever either desire or suffer those to be sponsors for their children that do not take care of their own souls. It is these inconsiderate and cruel men, who have no compassion for their own flesh that deprive their children of all the benefits of this wise institution, and bring a scandal on the institution itself by their wicked abuse of it. I therefore earnestly exhort all who have any concern either for their own or their children's souls, at all hazards, to procure such persons to be sponsors as truly fear God. Regard not whether they are rich or poor; and if they are poor, see that it be no expense to them. You will then tear up by the roots one of the most plausible objections which can be made against this primitive custom.

6. "For, thirdly, there is no reason why any truly serious man should scruple to undertake the office. If you suppose godfathers and godmothers undertake what is impossible to perform, you certainly mistake. And your mistake lies here—you think they undertake what they do not; do not you think the sponsors themselves undertake or promise that the child 'shall renounce the devil and all his works, constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments?' Whereas in truth they neither undertake nor promise any such thing. When they answer, 'I renounce them all. This I steadfastly believe. I will (obediently keep God's holy will and commandments);' they promise nothing at all, they engage for nothing, it is another person that promises all this. Whatever is then promised or undertaken, it is not by them but by the child. It is his part, not theirs; so the church tells you expressly. 'This infant must for *his* part promise.' It is he promises in these words, not they. So again—this child hath promised to renounce the devil, to believe in God and to serve him. If it be said, 'But why are those questions inserted, which seem to mean what they really do not?' I answer, I did not insert them, and

should not be sorry had they not been inserted at all. I believe the compilers of our liturgy inserted them because they were used in all the ancient liturgies; and their deep reverence for the primitive church made them excuse some impropriety of expression.

7. "What then is your part who are sponsors for the child? This likewise is expressly told you. 'It is your part to see that this infant be taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath here made by you. You shall call on him to hear sermons, and shall provide that he may learn the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments, and all other things which a christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health, and that this child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and christian life.'

8. "Can anything be plainer than what you do not, and what you do undertake? You do not undertake that he shall renounce the devil and serve God; this the baptised himself undertakes. You do undertake to see that he be taught what things a christian ought to know and believe. And what is there in this which is impossible, which any serious person may not perform?

9. "If then, you that are parents will be so wise and kind to your children as to waive every other consideration, and to choose for their sponsors those persons alone who truly fear and serve God; if some of you who love God and love one another, agree to perform this office of love for each others children, and if all you who undertake it perform it faithfully, with all the wisdom and power God hath given you, what a foundation of holiness and happiness may be laid even to your late posterity; then it may justly be hoped that not only you and your house, but also the children which shall be born, shall serve the Lord.

"Athlone, August 6, 1752."

Vol. 10, p. 506.

Still, the first objection which your Founder has answered above is reiterated without the slightest reflection. "There are no allusions to sponsors in the New Testament, and what is not enjoined in it should not be required of us." This objection should never proceed from the lips of a Methodist, for if his own peculiar services are brought to the test of scripture, upon what grounds do they rest? What allusions are there to *Class-meeting* in the book of God? None whatever. "Oh yes, there are, does not David say in the 66th Psalm, 'Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;' and Malachi tells us, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that fear the Lord, and that thought upon his name?' and does not St. James direct, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.' And will you say that these passages do not strongly inculcate class-meeting or something similar to it?" They have as much reference to it as they have to the doctrine which the Papists improperly found upon the last of them—namely, auricular confession. The following account of the origin of class-meeting, from the pen of Mr. Wesley, will shew you that he had not the least thought of scriptural ground for originat-



ing it, that in fact it was the creature of circumstance. "February 15th, 1742, many met together at Bristol, to consult concerning a proper method of paying the public debt, contracted by building, and it was agreed—1. That every member of the society that was able should contribute a penny a week. 2. That the whole society should be divided into little companies, or classes, about twelve in each class, and—3. That one person in each shall receive that contribution of the rest, and bring it to the stewards weekly. *Thus began that excellent institution, merely on a temporal account, from which we reaped so many spiritual blessings, that we soon fixed the same rule in all our societies*"—vol. 13, p. 276.

What proofs can you bring from the scripture in support of the manner in which you celebrate your *Love Feasts*? None. 'Oh, St. Jude speaks of persons who were 'Spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear.' He does; but what similarity is there between your love feast and the primitive feasts of charity? Compare your meetings with the following description of those which you pretend to be similar to them, from the pen of a contemporaneous writer:

"Our supper (says Tertullian), which you accuse of luxury, shows its reason in its very name, for it is called *ἀγάπη* (agapé), that is, love. Whatever charge we are at, it is gain to be at expense upon the account of piety, *for we therewith relieve and refresh the poor*. There is nothing vile or immodest committed in it, for we do not sit down before we have first offered up prayer to God. We eat only to satisfy hunger, and drink only so much as becomes modest persons. We fill ourselves in such a manner as that we remember still that we are to worship God by night. We discourse as in the presence of God, knowing that he hears us. Then, after water to wash our hands, and lights brought in, every one is moved to sing some hymn to God, either out of scripture, or as he is able of his own composing, and by this we judge whether he has observed the rules of temperance in drinking. Prayer again concludes our feast, and thence we depart, not to fight and quarrel, not to run about and abuse all we meet, not to give up ourselves to lascivious pastime, but to pursue the same care of modesty and chastity as men that have fed at a supper of philosophy and discipline rather than a corporeal feast."

The ancient "common harmless meal," as it is called by a heathen, was provided by the rich members of the church for those who were in poorer circumstances, *who were thereby relieved and refreshed*. Your feast is merely a partaking of a single mouthful of cake and water, by which the poor are not in the least relieved. Is there then the slightest similarity between them? and if there is not, they are not the feasts referred to by St. Jude.

Again: What scriptural authority have you for your band-meetings, your quarterly-ticket-system, your lay-prayer-leaders, your local preachers, your watch-nights, your camp-meetings, your covenant-meetings, and for the assumption of the priesthood by your preachers? None whatever. I might mention many other matters in the machinery of Methodism, which, like class-meeting, were the creatures of circumstances, but it is unnecessary to do so. If then

all things should be brought back to the standard of Scripture and of Scripture alone, where would the fabric of Methodism be found? She would have crumbled into ruin, and only those pure doctrines which she has received through the church would continue to exist.

But another objects, "I cannot attend your church, she teaches false doctrine, inasmuch as it is quite plain from her baptismal services she considers children are regenerated in baptism." She does, and so has the Catholic church in all ages taught, and strange to say, so should your own preachers, if they were consistent with their profession. It is not my design to prove the truth of this doctrine; I merely address you as Methodists, and tell you that this very doctrine is one of the standard doctrines of Methodism. The following is the manner in which the peculiar principles of Methodism are referred to in the trust deeds of Methodist chapels, "Provided always, that the persons preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's notes on the New Testament, and four volumes of sermons." Let us look into these standards, and you shall find that Mr. Wesley used in them language on this subject as plain, if not plainer, than that which is used by the church. Can anything be more explicit than the following? "The question is not, what was you made in baptism (do not evade), but what are you now? Is the spirit of adoption now in your hearts? To your own heart let the appeal be made. I ask not whether *you was born of water and of the Spirit*, but are you now the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in you. *I allow you was 'circumcised with the circumcision of Christ,' as St. Paul emphatically terms baptism*; but does the Spirit of Christ and of glory now rest upon you? \* \* \* \* \* Lean no more on the staff of that broken reed that you were born again in baptism *who denies that you were then made children of God and heirs of heaven.* \* \* \* \* \* And if ye have been baptized, your only hope is this, that those who were made children of God by baptism, but are now the children of the devil, may yet again receive power to become the Sons of God, that they may receive again what they have lost, even the spirit of adoption, crying in their hearts *Abba Father*," vol. 5, p. 421. "There may sometimes be the outward sign where there is not the inward grace. *I do not now speak with regard to infants.* It is certain our church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole office for the baptism of infants proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend how this work can be wrought in infants; for neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years," vol. 6, p. 75. Mr. Wesley's translation of Titus iii, c. 5, is as follows: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his own mercy he saved us *by the laver of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost." On which his note is "The effects" (of our redemption) "are, 1. Justification, being justified, pardoned, and accepted, through the alone merits of Christ, not from any desert in us, but according to his own mercy, by his grace, his free unmerited goodness. 2. Sanctification expressed by the *laver of regeneration* (that is, baptism the thing signified, as well as the outward sign), and the



renewal of the Holy Ghost, which purifies the soul as water cleanses the body and renews it in the whole image of God."

Other parts of his writings correspond with the preceding extracts from those which contain the doctrines that every Methodist preacher should hold.

"What are the benefits we receive by baptism, is the next point to be considered—and the first of these is *the washing away the guilt of original sin* by the application of the merits of Christ's death. \* \* And the virtue of this free gift, the merits of Christ's life and death, are applied to us in baptism. \* \* Agreeably to this our church—declares in the Rubric at the end of the office—'It is certain by God's word, that children who are baptised, dying before they commit actual sin, are saved'—and this is agreeable to the unanimous judgment of all the ancient Fathers. By baptism we enter into covenant with God—into that everlasting covenant which he hath commanded for ever. \* \* \* By baptism we are admitted into the Church, and consequently made members of Christ, its head. \* \* \* *By baptism we who were by nature the children of wrath are made the children of God*; and this regeneration, which our Church in so many places ascribes to baptism, is more than barely being admitted into the church, though commonly connected therewith; being 'grafted into the body of Christ's church, we are made the children of God by adoption and grace.' This is grounded upon the plain words of our Lord—'Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.' *By water then, as a means, the water of baptism, we are regenerated or born again, whence it is also called by the Apostle the washing of regeneration.* Our church therefore ascribes no greater virtue to baptism than Christ himself has done. Nor does she ascribe it to the outward washing, but to the inward grace, which added thereto makes it a sacrament. Herein a principle of grace is infused which will not be wholly taken away unless we grieve the Holy Spirit of God by long-continued wickedness. In consequence of our being made children of God we are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. 'If children (as the Apostle observes) then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.' *Herein we receive a title to, and an earnest of 'a kingdom which cannot be moved.'* Baptism doth now save us if we live answerably thereto, if we repent, believe, and obey the gospel, supposing this, as it admits us into the church here, so into glory hereafter."—*Treatise on Baptism*, vol. 10, p. 190, 192.

Your Hymn Books contain equally clear proofs that your Founder held the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, although this doctrine is now so strongly opposed by you.

"Eternal Spirit, descend from on high;  
Baptizer of our spirits thou  
The Sacramental seal apply;  
And witness with the water now,  
That the souls baptized therein  
May now thy truth and mercy feel;  
May rise and wash away their sin.

Come Holy Ghost their pardon seal.—Hymn 476, v. 5 & 6.

1. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
In solemn power come down ;  
Present with thy heavenly host,  
Thine ordinance to crown.  
*See a sinful worm of earth—  
Bless to him the cleansing flood ;  
Plunge him by a second birth  
Into the depths of God.*
2. *Let the promised inward grace  
Accompany the sign.  
On his new-born soul impress  
The character divine,—  
Father, all thy name reveal—  
Jesus, all thy name impart—  
Holy Ghost, renew and dwell  
For ever in his heart.*—Hymn 477.

God of eternal truth and love,  
Vouchsafe the promised aid we claim ;  
*Thine own great ordinance approve—  
The child baptized into thy name,  
Partaker of thy nature make—  
And give him all thine image back.*  
Father, if such thy sovereign will—  
If Jesus did the rite enjoin—  
Annex they hallowing Spirit's seal,  
And let the grace attend the sign—  
The seed of endless life impart ;  
Take for thine own this infant's heart.\*—Hymn 740.

These extracts show clearly what were the views of Mr. Wesley respecting this doctrine, and they would coincide perfectly with those of the Church, were it not that in conjunction with them Mr. Wesley held the opinion that it was necessary that after actual sin there should be a second new birth; thus making conversion and renewal synonymous with regeneration—an opinion which was not held by the fathers of the early church, if we may judge from the following quotations from the works of two of them :—

“To speak in few words, we are to consider the power of baptism as a contract with God for a second life, and a more pure conversation, *there being no second regeneration.*”—Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 370.

\* The above extracts have reference to infants, but the following passages shew that he considered that the due administration of the sacrament of baptism to adults was accompanied with the inward grace of regeneration.

“October 16, 1756—I baptized Hannah C., late a Quaker—God, as usual, bore witness to his ordinance.”—Vol. 2, p. 387.

“October 2, 1758—In the evening I baptized a young woman deeply convinced of sin; we all found the power of God was present to heal; and she herself felt what she had not words to express.”—Vol. 2, p. 450.

“February 5, 1760—I baptized a gentlewoman at the Foundry, and the peace she immediately found was a fresh proof that the outward sign, duly received, is always accompanied with the inward grace.”—Vol. 2, p. 523.

“December 26, 1785—I baptized a young woman brought up an Anabaptist, and God bore witness to his ordinance, filling her heart at the very time with peace and joy unspeakable.”—Vol. 4, p. 325.

"A child does not lose the grace which he has once received, except by his own impiety, if, as age increases he becomes so wicked—for then he will begin to have his own sins, which may not be taken away by regeneration, but healed by another cure."—Augustine, A. D. 398.

As the following letter of Mr. Wesley, written about four years before his death to Mr. William Percival, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, bears strongly upon several of the subjects now under consideration, I shall transcribe it, that you may see how very widely your practice, in those points, differs from his views:—

"DEAR BILLY,—You cannot be too watchful against evil speaking, or too zealous for the poor Church of England. *I commend sister Percival for having her child baptized there, and for returning public thanks. By all means go to Church as often as you can, and exhort all Methodists so to do. They that are enemies to the Church are enemies to me.* I am a friend to it, and ever was. By our reading prayers we prevent our people contracting an hatred for forms of prayer, which would naturally be the case if we always prayed extempore. I am, with love to S. Percival, Dear Billy, your affectionate Brother,

JOHN WESLEY."

London, February 17, 1787.

—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine for 1834.*

I had thought that these were the only objections raised by members of your Society, to the views of the church on this Sacrament, and must say that I was greatly surprised at learning that some of you have gone to a still greater distance from your Founder on the subject of Baptism than the preceding remarks would lead a stranger to your opinions to suppose, inasmuch as those to whom I now refer consider it merely as an old custom made use of in giving the name to a child, and that it might without injury be omitted.

I have lately had occasion to administer the sacrament of Baptism to an adult whose father is a member of one of those numerous bodies which trace their origin to Wesley; but I charitably suppose that her want of Baptism arose from neglect on the part of her parents, not from disregard to the command of the Saviour; and on another occasion, in conversation with a member of your Society, an expression was dropped which would lead me to suppose that the person with whom I was speaking had imbibed some of the notions of the Anabaptists. As I thought that this expression might have been the result of inadvertence, I paid no attention to it at the time; but I certainly was unprepared for the information, that persons who hold official positions in your Society would venture to say that there was no sacramental grace accompanying or even following the baptism of infants—that it was a mere name-giving ceremony, and might be very safely omitted—that infants were not proper objects for baptism, and that it was not a means of grace. I cannot avoid observing that the people who have such leaders cannot but be extremely ignorant, and that the preachers who permit such doctrines to be promulgated amongst their people without using their utmost exertions to remove them, must either be very ignorant

themselves and thereby incapable of answering the arguments of their Baptist members, or else very remiss in discharging the duty which they have taken upon themselves to perform.

The following passage from Wesley's works will shew that persons who hold these views are not Wesleyans:—

"The grand question is, who are the proper subjects of baptism, grown persons only or infants also. If infants are guilty of original sin then they are proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way they cannot be saved unless this be washed away by baptism." "Infants need to be washed from original sin, therefore they are proper subjects for baptism." He sums up a long article upon the subject in the following words:—"On the whole, therefore, it is not only lawful and innocent, but meet, right, and our bounden duty, in conformity to the uninterrupted practice of the whole Church of Christ, from the earliest ages, to consecrate our children to God by baptism, as the Jewish church were commanded to do by circumcision."—*Treatise on Baptism*, vol. 10, pp. 193 and 201.

If you require further proofs on this point, you can refer to those passages which I have already quoted in support of my assertions that he believed in the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. But as it may probably be of advantage to you to hear some of the reasons why infants are baptised in the Church of Christ, I shall with great brevity refer to a few of the principal.

1. God is not a changeable being, and what he has at one time marked with his approbation, he cannot be supposed at another time to disapprove of; but as he was pleased to admit infants into his church under the Jewish dispensation, and has nowhere declared that their right in this respect has been cancelled, we must therefore suppose that it is still pleasing to him to admit them under the Christian dispensation.

2. Baptism was not a novelty when appointed by Christ as the means of introduction into his church. It had not only been used by him before his passion, and by John the Baptist, but had been constantly practised by the Jews in admitting Gentile proselytes into their Church; and as they invariably baptized the children of their proselytes, we may very reasonably suppose that if this practice was not to be followed by the disciples of Jesus, he would have intimated the change to them when giving them their instructions to go and teach (or disciple or make proselytes of) all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.\*

\* "In the initiation of proselytes to the Jewish religion, according to the rabbinical writers, the three following services were appointed, namely, circumcision, baptism, and the offering of sacrifice; all of which, except circumcision, were performed by the women as well as by the men who became proselytes.

"1. Circumcision was the seal of the covenant into which the proselyte entered with God, and of the solemn profession which he made to observe the entire law of Moses; and if the proselyte were a Samaritan, or of any other nation that used that rite, blood was to be drawn afresh from the part circumcised.

"2. The second ceremony was washing or baptism, which must be performed in the presence of at least three Jews of distinction, and in the day time, that nothing might be done in secret. At the time of its performance, the proselyte declared his abhorrence of his past life, and that no secular motives, but a sincere love for the law of Moses, induced him to be baptized; and he was then instructed in the

3. The Apostle Paul expressly puts baptism in the place of circumcision in the following passage:—"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh *by the circumcision of Christ*; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead."—Col. chap. ii. ver. 11, 12. The circumcision of the law was performed on the eighth day; therefore the circumcision of Christ, which has superseded it, may also be administered in infancy.

4. Christians throughout the New Testament are always called saints, but children receive this designation (else were your children unclean *but now are they holy*—1 Cor. c. vii. v. 14, which is the same word that is translated in other places saints); therefore we may properly conclude they had received baptism, which is the only means of admission into the christian church.

5. Infants have been received into the church of Christ from the days of the Apostles to the present time. The following are a few proofs of this fact, from persons who lived during the first four centuries:—

In the latter end of the fourth century, Augustine says "that he never heard of any Christian, Catholic or sectary, who taught any other doctrine than that infants are to be baptized."

A. D. 230, Origen, in many places, declares "that infants were baptized by the usage of the church."

A. D. 200, Tertullian speaks of infant baptism as *the general practice* of his time.

A. D. 178, Irenæus says "Christ came to save all men through himself, all I say who through him are born again to God" (that is, in the language of the Primitive Fathers, baptized), "infants and little children, and boys, and youths, and old men."

A. D. 140, Justin Martyr mentions several persons who were disciples to Christ (that is, baptized) while children.

But in order to escape the difficulties in which you would be placed by the plain commands and express declarations of Wesley, some of you hesitate not to say that "he was only a man; and though a wise, and learned, and pious man, yet that there were others of his followers who were as wise, and learned, and pious as he; and as these have seen fit in their conference to alter some of his regulations, we can, with the greatest propriety, follow in their steps, and act upon their directions." Without laying stress upon the fact that this principle is closely allied to the doctrine of development, by which the errors of Popery were gradually introduced into the church, I would ask you why do you still retain his name? It is the boast of some of you that "Wesleyan is your name, and Methodist your surname;" but I consider that you cannot, with the

most essential parts of the law. He promised at the same time to lead a holy life, to worship the true God, and to keep His commandments.

"Baptism was also administered to the children of proselytes who were born before their parents became proselytes, and generally at the same time with their parents: but it was not administered to children born after that event, because the parents and their offspring were considered as Israelites, clean from their birth, and therefore were brought into covenant by circumcision alone.

"3. The third ceremony to be performed was that of offering sacrifice."—*Horne's Introduction*, vol. iii. p. 266.

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least propriety, retain his name as a distinctive appellation, inas-  
much as you have deviated, as I have shewn, in many points from  
him. As then your views and his do not correspond, as you are not  
Wesleyan in doctrine, nor yet in discipline, is there not a lie in your  
right hand, while you pretend to be his followers?

Others again say, "The government of the country acknowledges  
our ecclesiastical authority, and this in itself is sufficient to render  
our administration of the sacraments and other ecclesiastical acts  
perfectly valid." It is certainly a new phase in christianity, when  
its professed members look to temporal rulers for a confirmation of  
their clerical acts. According to this principle, the church could  
not be said to have had ecclesiastical powers until the days of Con-  
stantine, for the preceding Emperors had not only not acknowledged  
her authority, but had persecuted her even to the death. According  
to it, our own church would have been extinct in the days of Crom-  
well, when laws were passed against her; and by it your own society  
in England and her dependencies (where alone she has full tolera-  
tion) would be a church; but in Portugal, in Spain, or in Hayti  
(where your preachers have been imprisoned or expelled) she would  
have no existence. The government of a country may receive as  
legal evidence the books containing the registrations of baptisms  
performed by you; they may permit you to keep such registers, but  
their permission does not confer authority to baptize; that authority  
is derived from Christ, and from him alone; and until you can prove  
that your teachers have authority from him to administer the sacra-  
ments, your reference to the admission of your authority by the  
civil government is of no avail whatever.

Others again, possibly from an inhalation of the independence-  
giving air that blows across from the other side of our lakes, venture  
boldly to declare, "We are now a church, and as all churches are  
equal, we have no occasion to trouble ourselves about other churches,  
or to arrange our services to accommodate them." Will you tell  
me what process is followed in order to metamorphose a simple  
society into a church? Is it sufficient for this purpose to make a  
voyage across the Atlantic? for if I mistake not, the mother of you  
all is still satisfied with the appellation of the "United Society," or  
the "Wesleyan Methodist Society," or at least so it appears upon  
the face of her rules and her tickets; or would the recrossing of the  
same ocean be sufficient to unchurch its members, to reduce them  
again to the conditions of members of a society? Your claim to  
this title is quite new to me; I certainly never heard it in our native  
land, and cannot understand how it can be effected; my own view  
is, that the Saviour alone could found a church; that that church  
is one, and that those who cut themselves off from it do not form  
themselves into churches, but sects.

But granting, for argument sake, that you are a church, let me  
ask you further, what is meant by the equality of churches? This  
equality can only refer to doctrine, to disciplinary arrangement, or  
to political privileges; and would you venture to assert, that in point  
of doctrine, the Socinian, or the Universalist, or the Swedenborgian,  
or the Romanist, is upon terms of equality with you? or do you  
suppose the discipline of the sect of Methodists called Primitive, in

which lay delegates are admitted into conference to be equal with your own, where only preachers are admitted? for if so, why is your society rent, from one end of England to the other, through the refusal of your conference to grant those reforms which great numbers of its members are now demanding? and why are some of your oldest preachers\* expelled from conference for being considered advocates of these reforms? Or again, if disciplinary arrangements are all equal, what necessity is there for your body splitting itself into opposite sections almost *ad infinitum*, so that those who all pretend to derive their origin from Wesley, are at this moment biting and devouring one another, even in our own comparatively thinly-inhabited colony? or if all churches are politically equal, how could such of you as came from Ireland oppose what were called the Catholic claims, and join in sending in petition after petition to the imperial houses of parliament against any further concessions to Popery? You do not then, you will not grant that even those which may be properly called churches are equal.

But, with all regard to your feelings of independence, I would say that in the estimation of John Wesley you are both *not a church, and not on terms of equality with the church of the empire*. In his advice to assistants (that is, persons who are now called superintendents of circuits) he makes use of the following language: "Exhort all our people to keep close to the church and sacrament; warn them all against niceness in hearing, a prevailing evil; warn them also against despising the prayers of the church; *against calling our society the church; against calling our preachers ministers, our houses 'meeting-houses';* call them plain 'preaching-houses or chapels.'" Vol. 8, p. 320. Is this instruction carried out? Are you Wesleyans in this matter? Is it not the case, that you not only forget this advice, but act against it? Should I say forget, or rather that you are ignorant of it; for I might ask you, who amongst you here sees the "Larger Minutes," which contain the polity and doctrines of Methodism, as laid down by its Founder? These minutes were formerly published in a separate pamphlet, but are now I believe only to be seen in the pages of a voluminous work which is not possessed even by some of your preachers. In opposition to it, do we not now hear of Methodist ministers! Methodist parsons! Methodist churches! an expression which Mr. Wesley seems not to have dreamt of, and still further of THE METHODIST CHURCH! so that I think if Wesley were to return for a season to earth again, he would not be able to distinguish the creature of his own formation, it is so entirely changed from what it was at the last conference he attended of which he has left any account.

But I have said, that in Wesley's estimation your society is not on terms of equality with the church, in proof of which assertion I may quote the following passage from a sermon written in the year 1789, but two years before his death:

"I wish all of you who are vulgarly called Methodists, would seriously consider what has been said: and particularly you whom

\* Messrs. Dunne, Everett and Griffith, one of whom had been thirty years, another upwards of twenty years, and the third sixteen years in connexion with the Methodist Conference.



God hath commissioned to call sinners to repentance, *it doth by no means follow from hence, that you are commissioned to baptize or to administer the Lord's supper.* Ye never dreamed of this for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not then, like Korah, Dathan and Abiram, 'seek the priesthood also.' Ye know that 'no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' O contain yourselves within your own bounds; be content with preaching the gospel; do the work of evangelists; proclaim to all the world the lovingkindness of God our Saviour; declare to all 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand—repent ye and believe the gospel.' *I earnestly advise you, abide in your own place; keep your own station.* Ye were fifty years ago, those of you who were then Methodist preachers, *extraordinary messengers* of God; not going in your own will, but thrust out, *not to supersede, but to provoke to jealousy the ordinary messengers.* In God's name, stop there." Vol. 7, p. 279. Wesley then did not think that his preachers were on terms of equality with ministers of the church, whom he terms "the ordinary messengers," and looked upon any attempt to supersede them, such as was made after he was gathered to his fathers, as a sacrilegious imitation of the conduct of Korah, who, not satisfied with the ordinary duty of the Levite, sought the priesthood also.

But if your society is equal to the church, and consequently its preachers to ministers of the establishment, what reason is there why your deed of declaration, which is still binding upon your preachers, and shall be as long as Methodism shall have an existence, should make a distinction between the ordinary preachers and *ordained ministers of the Church of England*, by which, if a clergyman joins your conference, he could claim a permanent settlement in any of your circuits in which he may be located by conference. "Eleventh. The conference shall not nor may nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of or to preach and expound God's holy word in any of the chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, who is not either a member of the conference or admitted into connexion with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid, nor appoint any person for more than three years successively to the use and enjoyment of any chapel and premises already given, or to be given or conveyed upon the trust aforesaid, *except ordained ministers of the Church of England.*"—Vol. 4, p. 509.

Others amongst you bring forward, as proofs of your equality with the church, that "you have Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered among yourselves by your own preachers." I know that they have assumed a right to administer the christian sacraments, but does the assumption of this right make it valid? I think you will say, that mere assumption gives no authority, and that the administration of the Sacraments by lay individuals is of no effect; at least this concession has been made to me by some of you, with regard to a dissenter in our township, who pretends to administer the Sacrament of the Supper of the Lord, and also with regard to the inability of your local preachers and class-leaders to administer it; but I contend that the administration of these ordinances by your travelling preachers stands upon the very same basis—mere



assumption, and is consequently invalid; that though they assume to be clergymen, they are all mere laymen, and have no more authority from Christ to discharge these duties than the simplest individual in your societies. I know that you will consider this a strong assertion, but it is an assertion based upon Mr. Wesley's writings, and in proof of it I need only refer to his sermon on the ministerial office, an extract from which you will find on the preceding page. The following extract from the same sermon, strongly proves this point:—"In 1744, all the Methodist preachers had their first conference, but none of them dreamed that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. And when that question was proposed, 'In what light are we to consider ourselves?' it was answered, 'As *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy.' In order hereto, one of the first rules was given to each preacher,—'You are to do *that part* of the work which we appoint.' But what work was this? Did we ever appoint you to administer sacraments, to exercise the priestly office? Such a design never entered into our mind—it was farthest from our thoughts; and if any preacher had taken such a step we should have looked upon it as a palpable breach of this rule, and consequently as a recantation of our connexions. For, supposing, what I utterly deny, that the receiving you as a preacher at the same time gave you authority to administer the sacraments, yet it gave you no other authority than to do it or any thing else where I appoint. *But where did I appoint you to do this? No where at all.* Therefore by this very rule, you are excluded from doing it. And in doing it, you renounce the first principle of Methodism, which was wholly and solely to preach the gospel. It was several years after our society was formed before any attempt of this kind was made. The first was, I apprehend, at Norwich. *One of our preachers there yielded to the importunity of a few of the people, and baptized their children; but as soon as it was known, he was informed it must not be, unless he designed to leave our connexion.* He promised to do it no more, and I suppose he kept his promise."—Vol. 7, p. 277.

Since then Wesley disclaimed, but two years before his death, any authority on the part of his preachers to administer those ordinances which have been invariably considered the peculiar office of the priesthood, and yet these ordinances are now administered by them. From whence have they received this authority? The various bodies of Methodists have assumed it at different times; the English conference in 1792, and the Irish in 1816; but in both cases the reason assigned is the pressure from without, arising from petitions from their people to take this office on themselves, as they did not wish to receive the supper of the Lord from clergymen who they were pleased to consider were improper persons to administer it. But could any pressure from without invest individuals with sacerdotal authority? We have just seen, that in Mr. Wesley's opinion it could not. This authority is not derived from man, but is received by succession from those who were commissioned at the first to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature—since no man can invest another with official authority which he himself does not possess either in his own person or by virtue of a commission

from a superior, who has the power to elevate to office, and to invest with authority, so, neither can any men or number of men authorize others to take upon them the sacred office of the ministry if they be not themselves in the ministry, and in that degree of it which, deriving the authority from Christ himself, has always been the vehicle of continuing to His church the blessing of an ordained priesthood.

To bring this subject closer to yourselves, as Irishmen, for I believe that the greatest part, if not the whole of the Methodists of my mission are from that country: Some of you can remember 35 years ago, and can call to mind the great excitement that prevailed in the Methodist societies in that country, in consequence of the rupture that then took place, and the rent which was then made in them, and which still continues. Will you then tell me by what process could the conference, which in 1815, by an almost unanimous vote, declared that its preachers were but laymen, within one year, by a stultifying of their former vote, metamorphose themselves into clergymen, without any ordination or extra call to the sacred office; this was a mere assumption on their part, of the office to which but a year before they acknowledged they had no right,—and would not a similar assumption by your local preachers, or your class-leaders, or even by ordinary members of your society, be of equal force, and carry with it as much authority?\*

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\* The following extracts from "The Centenary of Methodism—Dublin, 1839," will show the manner in which the Irish preachers received authority to administer the sacraments. "When the British Conference adopted the principle of sacramental administration amongst themselves, the Irish Methodists alone, of all the Societies that had been formed in both hemispheres, adhered to the simple plan originally established by Mr. Wesley, and those that were in connexion with him. In the year 1792, as appears from the Minutes of the Irish Conference, the subject was discussed in that assembly whether the plan pursued by their English brethren should be adopted in this country or not, and it was *unanimously rejected* by the preachers assembled on that occasion." "Had the Methodists of this country however, been undecided upon this subject, the minds of the wavering ought to have been completely set at rest by a letter addressed in 1814, by Mr. William Stewart, to the Methodist Preachers in Ireland, in which he not only discusses the propriety of the measure itself, but also charges some of his junior brethren amongst the preachers with being the sole cause of that agitation which had been created throughout the Societies. At the meeting of the Conference, immediately before the publication of Mr. Stewart's letter, a vote had been passed in favor of the change, but at the earnest entreaty of some of the leading members of the connexion the operation of this vote was suspended for twelve months, until the sense of the body at large should be fully ascertained upon the subject. During the following year, as the zeal of both parties was in a considerable degree of excitement, the measure was fully canvassed, and its inexpediency was so clearly pointed out, as well as the overwhelming torrent of public opinion so decidedly expressed against it, that in July, 1815, the preachers were obliged to abandon their favourite project, and to publish a letter to the Societies that had petitioned for the sacraments, stating the impracticability of complying with their request. 'As guardians of Methodism in Ireland,' say they, 'everything that can be done, consistent with the best interests of the body, we feel most cordially disposed to do; but on a review of all circumstances, we assure you in the most affectionate manner, that in our judgment, to meet your case, as might be desired by you, would certainly prove injurious to our connexion at large.'"

"But the fomentors of the popular discontent were not to be discouraged by the gloomy forebodings of some of their brethren, and were resolved to hazard every consequence in accomplishing those designs which they had been so long projecting. Accordingly, some of the preachers, dissatisfied with the decision to which the Conference had come, returned to their circuits, and without license or appointment from any quarter, began to act upon their own judgment, and administered

The same remarks hold good with regard to the English Conference, which, during Mr. Wesley's lifetime, and even two or three years before his death, by a unanimous vote, declared the utter inexpediency of separating from the church,\* but which, when he was scarcely cold in his grave, rendered their former professions nugatory, by taking upon themselves an office which Mr. Wesley to his dying hour declared did not belong to them; they entered the service of Mr. Wesley as *mere preachers*; they never thought, when entering it, that it was their duty to exercise the office of the priesthood, their doing so during his lifetime would be a virtual withdrawal from him—but as soon as he was removed, they took upon themselves to exercise this office, and as they received no authority from those who could invest them with it, their authority was self-assumed, and therefore was, and continues to be invalid.

But some of you say that "an inward call to preach the gospel carries with it an authority to administer these ordinances," but does your Conference think so? it does not, for it does not permit

the Lord's Supper to every one that was willing to receive it at their hands. This proceeding probably accelerated the subsequent measure of the Conference, as at the ensuing meeting of that body, in 1816, the matter was brought forward again, and finally passed by a majority of voices, 62 appearing for the measure, and only 26 against it. By this vote the preachers empowered themselves to administer the ordinances under certain regulations and restrictions that were stated in a 'Letter of Pacification,' which was afterwards published by the Conference."

\* "May 6, 1755.—Our Conference began at Leeds. The point on which we desired all the preachers to speak their minds at large, was, 'whether we ought to separate from the Church?' Whatever was advanced on one side or the other was seriously and calmly considered, and on the third day we were all fully agreed in that general conclusion, that (whether it was lawful or not) it was no ways expedient."—Vol. 2, p. 329.

"August 26, 1756.—We then largely considered the necessity of keeping in the Church, and using the Clergy with all tenderness, and there was no dissenting voice; God gave us all to be of one mind and of one judgment."

"My brother and I closed the Conference by a solemn declaration of our purpose never to separate from the Church, and all our brethren concurred therein."—Vol. 2, p. 385.

"July 27, 1786.—In the afternoon we permitted any of the Society to be present, and weighed what was said about separation from the Church. *But we all determined to continue therein, without one dissenting voice*; and I doubt not but this determination will stand at least till I am removed into a better world."—Vol. 4, p. 343.

"August 28, 1789.—The Conference began—about one hundred preachers were present, and never was our Master more earnestly with us. *The case of separation from the Church was largely considered, and we were all unanimous against it.*"—Vol. 4, p. 466.

The subject of separation from the Church was frequently discussed in the Irish Conference, and always met with a negative.

"July 5, 1760.—Ten of us met in a little Conference. By the blessing of God we were all of one mind, particularly with regard to the Church, even J. D. has not now the least thought of leaving it, but attends there, be the minister good or bad."—Vol. 3, p. 9.

"July 7, 1778.—Our little Conference began, at which about twenty preachers were present. On Wednesday we heard one of our friends at large, upon the duty of leaving the Church, but *after a full discussion of the point, we all remained firm in our judgment that it is our duty not to leave the Church wherein God has blessed, and does bless us still.*"—Vol. 4, p. 131.

"July 3, 1789.—Our little Conference began in Dublin, and ended Tuesday 7. On this I observe,—1st. I never had between forty and fifty such preachers together in Ireland before, all of them we had reason to hope, alive to God, and earnestly devoted to his service. 2nd, I never saw such a number of preachers before, so unanimous in all points, *particularly as to leaving the Church, which none of them had the least thought of.*"—Vol. 4, p. 464.

those who are received on trial as preachers to exercise this office until their term of probation terminates and they are admitted into full connexion—it does not permit your local preachers to discharge those offices, many of whom think that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to them as strongly as any of your travelling preachers; it should then be consistent, as it refuses permission to probationers and local preachers to exercise the sacerdotal office, because they have not been admitted to it by a competent authority, it should not confer it upon its own members—for looking backwards for a generation or two, it might see that the preachers sixty years ago had, as they supposed, an inward call to preach the gospel, which inward call was seconded by an outward one from Mr. Wesley to *preach* to his Societies, but to execute no other part of the priestly office—consequently any further exercise of that office by them was self-assumed, and could not be conferred upon succeeding preachers, so that the authority of the present race of Methodist Preachers being derived from those who had no authority to confer it, can have no effect.

In my next letter I shall consider more fully the principle on which the assumption of the duties of the priesthood, by Methodist Preachers, is based; and again request you to reflect upon what you have already read. Conviction comes not from mere reading, but from serious reflection upon what has been read—reflect then seriously upon the proofs that I have brought forward, of the great difference that exists between the teachings of Wesley and those of Methodist preachers of the present day on the subject of baptism, and either give up the name of Wesley or hold the doctrines that he strongly and truly enunciated upon this important subject.

I am, my dear friends,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

JOHN FLETCHER.

Mono, September, 1852.

### LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

The objections replied to in my former letters have been made chiefly by such of you as profess to be in connection with the Wesleyan Methodist Society; but as there are some persons in this mission who belong to what is called the Methodist Episcopal Church, which claims episcopal authority by descent from Mr. Wesley, it is necessary that I should offer a few remarks that will apply more fully to them: that Mr. Wesley for some time thought that he was a scriptural bishop according to the sense of the term made use of by Presbyterian divines, I fully admit, but it was possible for him to have been mistaken, as well as for the writer of the work which led him to that opinion, and who afterwards changed his mind upon the subject—that he did not think that he had conferred episcopal authority upon Dr. Coke, (who, by the way, was as high in office as himself, being a Priest of the Church of England),

and upon Mr. Asbury, *who was a layman, and never received ordination from him*; whose authority to act as joint superintendents was merely conveyed by letter, is plain, from his letter to Mr. Asbury, after he had heard of his taking the name of Bishop, in which he says:—*"How can you—how dare you suffer yourself to be called Bishop!"* I shudder—I start at the very thought; men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me Bishop; *for my sake—for God's sake—for Christ's sake put a full end to this.*"—Vol. 13, p. 58. Mr. Wesley did not then think that his appointment of these two individuals, as superintendents, constituted them Bishops, otherwise he would not have made use of these strong terms of censure towards Mr. Asbury.

That he held the opinion that ordinations by Bishops were the only valid ones, is equally clear from the consideration, that even after he read Lord King's account of the Primitive Church, he declares, "I still believe the Episcopal form of Church Government to be scriptural and apostolical—I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles."—Vol. 13, p. 178. Again, in speaking on the subject of Christian Charity in his "Cautions against Bigotry," he addresses some who may have objections to that "Liturgy which we approve of beyond all others, many doubts concerning *that form of Church government which we esteem both apostolical and scriptural.*"—Vol. 5, p. 485. In his sermon on "The Catholic Spirit," he says,—"I believe the Episcopal form of Church Government to be scriptural and apostolical."—Vol. 5, p. 499. These two last passages are remarkable, inasmuch as they are taken from two of those sermons which I have before observed, together with Mr. Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, constitute the standard doctrines of Methodism—such Preachers therefore as do not consider the Episcopal form of Church Government to be scriptural and apostolical, hold views contrary to these standard doctrines. Might I not ask can you find a single preacher in your connexion who, on this point, agrees with the sermon which at his *ordination!* he professes to have read, and to which he assents.

Again, in a letter written to the Rev. Mr. Fleming, in 1791, many years after he had read Lord King's Book, he says,—"*Seeing life everlasting and holiness or health of soul are things of so great importance, it is highly expedient that Ministers, being Physicians of the soul, should have all advantages of education and learning. That full trial should be made of them in all respects, and that by the most competent judges, before they enter on the public exercise of their office, the saving souls from death. That after such trial, they be authorised to exercise that office by those who are empowered to convey that authority. I believe Bishops are empowered to do this and have been so from the Apostolic age,*" vol. 9, p. 184. The preceding extracts show that Mr. Wesley's mind was not fully assured on the point of his being a Scriptural Bishop according to the Presbyterian notion of the word, and capable of conveying the authority of the Ministry, while on the other hand the last clause of his letter to Mr. Asbury plainly intimates that he had seen reason to change his views on it, and to think that the Episcopal, not the Presbyterian form of ordination, was the only valid one. "*Let the Presbyterians do what*

they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better."—Vol. 13, p. 38.

"But did he not ordain Preachers for Scotland and for England as well as appoint others for America?" He did—and as on this point I think he greatly erred, I shall be obliged to draw out my remarks to a greater length than I have hitherto done, in order to show from the writings of those who lived in the purest days of Christianity, that the views he held on this subject while performing these schismatical ordinations were not those that were held in the primitive ages, although they are still held by the various Methodist Conferences and are mainly relied on by them as reasons for their continuance in schism.\*

It is allowed on all hands, that at the time of the Reformation the whole Christian world was governed by those who were then and are now called Bishops; and that it was not until after that period that persons were called to the Ministry by Presbyterian ordinations—that is, by persons who filled the office of Presbyters, or in some cases, as in that of Calvin himself, entered upon the office of the Ministry without any ordination, and also that up to the same period there were three distinct orders of Ministers in the Church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,—it is then a proper subject of enquiry at what period was it that the highest duties of the Christian Ministry came into the hands of the order of Bishops. Was it in the dark ages of Popery, or in the centuries immediately succeeding the time of the Apostles, when the Church was in a state of greater purity, or was the Episcopal office as distinct from those of Presbyter and Deacon coeval with Christianity? Our Church declares that she considers the threefold Ministry has continued in the Church Catholic from the Apostolic age. "It is evident to all men diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostolic time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons,"—Preface to the form of Ordination. Others

\* "It should not be concealed, however, that after his assumption of episcopal authority, Mr. Wesley was prevailed upon by some of the preachers to ordain three of them without sending them out of England, but whatever was his motive for doing so, we have the authority of the Clergyman who assisted him in those ordinations, for saying, that he deeply regretted this act when he afterwards took a calm and unbiassed view of the subject. In reply to a pamphlet written by Mr. Samuel Bradburn, in 1793, the Rev. Mr. Creighton observes,—'You say Mr. W. never repented of the steps he had taken.' If you mean the ordination and the allowing preachers to administer the ordinances in Great Britain, I must take the liberty positively to contradict you. *He did repent of it, and with tears expressed his sorrow, both in public and private.* In the last edition of the large Minutes, printed about a year and a-half before his death, he intimates nearly the same thing with a kind of sarcasm thus:—'But how hard is it to abide here (*i. e.*, content to be a lay preacher), and not wish to be a little higher—suppose to be ordained.' He likewise expressed his sorrow respecting this matter at the Leeds Conference, in 1789, and occasionally afterwards in London, until his death. About six weeks before his death he said to a respectable person, near London, 'They (the preachers) are now too powerful for me.' I had an opportunity of knowing his particular sentiments from August 1780, to his death, when I conducted the press under him.' This testimony from a gentleman who being a presbyter of the Church of England, had been induced to assist Mr. Wesley in his ordinations, is a sufficient proof that the latter was prevailed upon by the under influence of some of the preachers, to act as he had done, especially as his brother Charles had ceased to afford a counteracting influence to their projects of separation."—Centenary of Methodism, Dublin Edition, p. 271.



consider that there were originally but two orders in the Church, Bishop or Presbyter and Deacon; and that gradually from prudential reasons by common consent one Presbyter was chosen from among his fellows, and appointed to have the oversight of the rest—here the matter lies at issue, and it can only be decided by the voice of antiquity and the word of God: to these the Church has always expressed her willingness to leave the decision; and we have no doubt but that an impartial mind will acknowledge that her orders are at least of Apostolic appointment.

We are accustomed to hear Prelacy and Popery united together as if they were coeval, and that each was a support to the other; but it is evident from a mere glance at the face of the world that they are totally distinct, and are merely united in expression to produce the greater effect upon the minds of the simple and ignorant, for let us turn where we may we shall find Bishops, Priests and Deacons, not only in the Roman Church but even among persons who had not the slightest connection with her—thus the Greek Church, the Oriental, the Coptic, the Abyssinian, the Armenian, the Nestorian Churches, and the Church of St. Thomas in the East Indies, were all and still are under the superintendence of Bishops, and have the threefold Ministry among them. It was not then during the dark ages of Popery that Bishops obtained the chief authority, inasmuch as they possessed it among people who in remote ages had no knowledge of or intercourse with Rome, or else looked upon that Church as heretical.

I shall then pass over this opinion as unnecessary to confute, and shall bring forward the evidence of writers of the first four centuries of Christianity, and passages of Scripture, in support of the views of the Church on the subject:—

ST. JEROME, A.D. 374.—“What is it that a bishop does, which a presbyter cannot do, except ordination?”

ST. AMBROSE.—“One duty is required by God of bishops, another of priests, and another of deacons.”

EPIPHANIUS.—“How is it possible that this should be (that presbyters should be equal to bishops), since the order of bishops begets fathers for the Church, whereas the order of presbyter has no power to beget fathers or teachers, but only to beget sons to the Church by baptism? Indeed how should any presbyter constitute teachers, when he has not the power to impose hands in ordination?”

CYPRIAN, A.D. 248.—“This, brother, is and ought to be our principal and study to the utmost of our power, to take care that the unity may still obtain which was delivered by our Lord and by his apostles, *to us their successors.*”

TERTULLIAN, A.D. 192.—“The power of baptizing is lodged in the bishop, and it may also be exercised by presbyters and deacons, but not without the bishop’s commission.”

IGNATIUS, A.D. 101.—“Since I am accounted worthy to see you, through your bishop, Damas, beloved of God, and your worthy presbyters, Bassus and Apollonius, and my fellow servant Sotion the deacon, whom I esteem, because he is subject to the bishop as the grace of God, and to the presbyters as the law of Christ.”

“CLEMENT, of Rome, A.D. 94.—“Our apostles also knew, through

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our Lord Jesus Christ, that a contention should arise respecting the episcopate, for which reason, being endowed with perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who had been foreshown to them, and then gave them ordination, that when they were dead, other approved men might receive the office of the ministry."—First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. 14.

These passages clearly show, that up to the apostolic age there were three orders of ministers, and that of these three, bishops alone were considered successors of the apostles, and had the power of conferring orders. These, and many others of a similar character, were so satisfactory to the minds of some of the early foreign Reformers, as to compel them to acknowledge that they did not desire the overthrow of the episcopal order. "It is not intended by us to take away jurisdiction from the bishops; but this one thing we require of them, that they would suffer the gospel to be purely taught, and that they would release a few certain ordinances which cannot be observed without sin."—*Augsburg Confession*, drawn up by Melancthon, and sanctioned by Luther." The Reformer Zanchius gives the following strong testimony in favour of the received distinctions of the ranks of ministers:—"What is more certain from histories, from councils, and from the writings of all the fathers, than that those orders of ministers of whom we have spoken had been appointed and received in the church with the common consent of the whole christian world? and what am I that I should disapprove of what the whole church has marked with its approbation?"

I think the following characters, by Mr. Wesley, of three of those fathers whose language has been quoted, may cause their testimony to be received by you, as Methodists, with a greater degree of favour than if they came before you without such support. "What says *St. Cyprian*, who lived in the midst of that century, *a witness above all exception*, and one that sealed the truth with his blood?"—Vol. 1, p. 165.

In his preface to the Epistles of the Apostolic Fathers *St. Clement*, *St. Ignatius*, and *St. Polycarp*, he says,—“The authors of the following collections were contemporaries of the holy Apostles, one of them bred under our Lord himself, and the others well instructed by those great men whom he commissioned to go forth and teach all nations. We cannot therefore doubt but what they delivered to us is the pure doctrine of the gospel,—what Christ and his Apostles taught,—what these holy men had themselves received from their own mouths.”—Vol. 14, p. 238.

But, you may ask, what evidence is brought on the opposite side of the question, since the advocates of mere presbyterian ordination refer also in support of their claims to the voice of antiquity? The principal witness adduced by them is *St. Jerome*, who, we have seen, lived A.D. 374, and in one of his epistles asserts, that “presbyters and bishops were originally one order; but that divisions being occasioned by the equality of presbyters, it was decreed all the world over that one of the presbyters in every church should be set over the rest, and peculiarly called bishop; and that the chief care of the church should be committed to him;” but he does not attempt to bring forward any proof of this assertion, and it cer-



tainly would be an astonishing circumstance if such an universal decree should have been passed by the church, and yet not one contemporary writer mentions either the time or the place where it was first passed.

Another supporter of presbyterian orders is Acrius, who, being disappointed of a bishopric, exerted himself to prove that presbyters and bishops were the same order; but his views obtained but very little attention at the time, and are branded by Epiphanius, a contemporary, as "a notion full of folly and madness, beyond what human nature is capable of."

A third supporter of these orders is Colluthus, who not only held these views, but put them in practice, by ordaining a person named Ischyrras to the office of the ministry; but his conduct is reprov'd, and his ordination declared invalid, by a synod of bishops of his native country, who thus record their views concerning it:—"This is the famous Ischyrras who was neither ordained by the church, nor reckoned among the presbyters ordained by Melitius, whom Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, received. How then came Ischyrras to be a presbyter, and by whom was he ordained? Was it by Colluthus? for that only remains to be said. But Colluthus died a presbyter, so that all the impositions of his hands were invalid and null, and all those who were ordained in his schism are well known to have been reduced to the laity."

I have looked carefully into some of the works written by supporters of this system of ordination for their reasons for upholding it, but must say that I could find very few. Your own Watson endeavours to maintain it, but it is by argument alone. Calvin deals largely in assertions, but acknowledges the very great antiquity of bishops, and the necessity of a superior in the deliberations of religious assemblies. "The office of teaching was committed to the elders. They, according to their office, did choose one in every city, to whom they gave the title of bishop, *lest through equality discord should arise*. Yet he had no lordship over his fellows; but the bishop had that function in the company of elders which the consul had in the senate, that by his authority he might govern the whole action, and that he might execute that which was decreed by the common council; and that was brought in by mere consent, according to the necessity of the time. In every city they had a college of elders, which were pastors and doctors; also there was given to every city a certain country, which did take elders there, and should as it were be accounted into the body of that church. If the country were larger under the bishopric, then they appointed country bishops, who, through the same province, did represent the bishop."—*Calvin's Institutes*, book iv. chap. 4, sec. 2: "Of the state of the old church, and the manner of governing which was in use before Popery."

This is nothing but a repetition of the statement of Jerome mentioned on the last page, and would require corroborative evidence to induce an impartial investigator of the subject to receive it in opposition to the testimony of the "cloud of witnesses" who give evidence on the opposite side of the question. But even this assertion of Calvin's gives a power to bishops which the elders of presbyterian

denominations have never laid claim to; he states that "the bishop had that function in the company of elders which the consul had in the senate." Consuls were magistrates at Rome, with regal authority for the space of one year. Their power was unbounded, and they knew no superior but the laws. They presided over the senate, and could convene and dismiss it at pleasure; they laid before them what they pleased, and executed their decrees. "But if the bishops were so far in dignity above the ministers as the consuls of Rome for their year above other senators, it is as much as we require; and undoubtedly, if, as the consuls of Rome, so the bishops in the church of Christ had such authority as both to direct other ministers, and to see that every of them should observe that which their common consent had agreed on,—how this could be done by the bishop not bearing rule over them, for mine own part I must acknowledge that my poor conceit is not able to apprehend."—*Hooker's Ecc. Polity*, book vii. chap. 6.

Others endeavour to support their opinions, by stating the acknowledged fact that the terms bishop and presbyter are used in the New Testament of the same persons, and that they are shewn to belong to the one order. We grant this; but yet say that, allowing it, there are still three orders of ministers mentioned in the sacred scriptures,—apostle, bishop or presbyter, and deacon; and that with a change of the name of the first order, these three have continued in the church from the apostolic age to the present. I have already proved the latter part of the assertion; I shall now shew that the name *apostle* was applied to others beside the Twelve, and that after some time it was changed by those who held the office for the less honourable appellation bishop. Matthias, who was not one of the twelve appointed by Christ, is called an apostle, Acts i. 26; Paul and Barnabas are throughout the Acts of the Apostles and in St. Paul's Epistles invariably styled by this name, Acts xiv. 12; Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1, &c. Andronicus and Junia are said to be of note among the apostles, Rom. xiv. 7. Silvanus and Timothy, who united with St. Paul in writing the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, are in chap. ii. 6, all equally called "the apostles of Christ."

Again, the word which we translate *apostle* is sometimes translated *churches*; thus 2 Cor. viii. 23, "or our brethren be enquired of, they are the *messengers of the churches*, and the glory of Christ;" upon which the note of your commentator, Dr. A. Clarke, is,— "Should any enquire who are these brethren, Luke and Apollos, I answer they are *αποστολοι*, *apostles of the churches*, and intensely bent on promoting the glory of Christ." "I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and companion in labour and fellow-soldier, *but your messenger*, and he that ministered to my wants."—Phil. ii. 25. Part of the note of Dr. Clarke on this passage is,— "He was *their apostle*, a man whom God had honored with apostolical gifts, apostolical graces, and apostolical fruits." The correctness of this comment is confirmed by the following extract from St. Jerome, the pillar on which presbyterian orders may be said to be built:—"In process of time *others were ordained apostles*,

by those whom our Lord had chosen, as that passage in Phillippians shews, I suppose it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, *your apostle*."—*Comment on Galatians*, i. 19. But the name apostle did not continue long in the church, although those who resigned it still considered themselves the *successors of the apostles*. They were influenced by a spirit of true humility, and considered it most proper for those who were emphatically the apostles of Christ. Thus Hilary the deacon declares, A.D. 384,—“They who are now called *bishops* were originally called *apostles*; but the holy apostles being dead, they who were ordained to govern the church could not arrive at the same excellency as these first, nor had they the testimony of miracles, but were in many other respects inferior to them.”

Thus, we see, that the almost unanimous testimony of antiquity, traced to the age of the apostles (for Ignatius was the disciple of St. John, and Clement's name is mentioned in Phil. iv. 3), is in favour of the views of the church on the subject of the threefold ministry, and of the peculiar office and authority of bishops. We may now turn our attention to the sacred writings, and the same truths will be evident to our minds. The names apostle, bishop or presbyter, and deacon, occur very frequently in the New Testament as indicative of the distinct offices of persons connected with the church of Christ. I have already shewn that the name of the first of these orders was not confined to the Twelve, but was bestowed upon others who were not sent by Christ himself. A reference to the Epistles to Titus and Timothy, to whom this name was given, will shew that *not merely the name, but also the authority of the apostleship*, was conferred upon them, inasmuch as they were directed to *ordain elders and deacons*, to exercise jurisdiction over them, to reprove them for improper conduct, to restrain them from preaching erroneous doctrines, and to set in order the things which were wanting. It may be said that they were evangelists, and from holding that office exercised extraordinary jurisdiction; but this name conferred no such authority, for it is synonymous with the designation which was given to your preachers during Mr. Wesley's lifetime, and in Ireland for many years afterwards,—“preacher of the gospel;” and would you suppose that the taking or receiving of that name by them gave them authority over the church of God? But the case of Philip, who was also called an evangelist, fully shows that such persons had not on that account power over the church, inasmuch as he had not authority to lay hands even for confirmation on the Samaritans who were converted by his instrumentality, so that it was necessary that for this purpose apostles should be sent from Jerusalem.

“But the apostles call themselves presbyters, and is not this a clear proof that the office of the elder or bishop was equal to their own?” Certainly not. If the name had been shewn to be convertible we should then acknowledge that the offices were the same, but until it can be proved that elders are called apostles, as well as apostles elders, we must hesitate to acquiesce in such an opinion. However, the attempt to prove the equality of offices by the name of the inferior having been taken by one holding the superior office

will prove too much for those who depend upon it—for, in the first place, it would give to the elder a power which would overthrow the whole system of Presbyterian ordinations. Paul *alone* ordained elders, and so did Timothy, and so did Titus—if then the elder and apostle are equal, what need is there that the presbytery or the conference should *unitedly* confer orders, but cannot each duly accredited elder or presbyter by virtue of his own individual authority, imitate the example of these apostles, and admit to the holy office such candidates as they may think fit for it. Again, the Episcopal Methodists, who argue for the equality of elders and bishops, preserve a distinction between them, and have also another order called deacons, totally distinct from these; and different Presbyterian sects have officers bearing the same name, but distinct from their elders; and will any of these bodies venture to say that these deacons are equal to their presbyters or elders in order and authority? Certainly not—and yet we find the Apostle Paul calling himself a deacon. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos but ministers (*διδάκονοι* deacons) by whom ye believed.”—1 Cor. iii. 5. “Who also hath made us able ministers (*διακόνους* deacons) of the New Testament.”—2 Cor. iii. 6. “In all things approving ourselves as the ministers (*διδάκονοι* deacons) of God.”—2 Cor. vi. 4. And again, he addresses one who is acknowledged to have been in the superior order, as if he was merely a deacon—“do the work of an evangelist—make full proof of thy ministry (*διακονίαν* diaconate)—2 Tim. iv. 5. If then the assumption of the name of an inferior office by the apostle, through a principle of humanity, be a proof that presbyters and apostles are the same order, by a parity of reasoning we can easily prove that deacons and apostles are the same, which the most ardent advocates of Presbyterian ordination do not acknowledge.

On the whole, we find the voice of antiquity and the Word of God (with a slight change of name, which has been already accounted for) agreeing with our church in her statement that “there have been always in the church these three orders, bishops, priests, and deacons.” I shall therefore draw this part of my subject to a close with the following extract from the Notes on the New Testament, by your Commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke:—“Episcopacy in the church of God is of divine appointment, and should be maintained and respected—under God there should be supreme governors in the church as well as in the state. The state has its monarch, the church has its bishop—one should govern according to the laws of the land, the other according to the Word of God.”

But you tell me that “the maintaining these principles is a virtual “unchurching of all other churches, and as such, a species of religious persecution.” I deny that opposition to the erroneous principles of any denomination is persecution, for “do I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” It is a duty enjoined upon every christian by the word of God, to keep separate from those whose life does not accord with the principles of the gospel of Christ. Is it persecution to shun the drunkard, or the covetous, or the railer—you would not say that it is; and although this is not practiced by professing christians, yet it is commanded

(1 Cor. v. 9, 11); and what are the evils produced by drunkenness, or covetousness, or obscene language, compared with those which have been engendered by schism. As you may not be able at the moment to call to mind those passages of scripture which direct us to keep aloof from those who cause schism—I shall therefore mention a few. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."—Rom. xvi. 17. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye have received of us."—2 Thes. iii. 6. "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed, for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."—2 John 10, 11.

The original dissenters from the church were very few in number; the objections to her were not so numerous as to cause the almost infinite variety of sects which at this time disgrace the face of christianity; but when the puritanical leaven was once set to work it burst forth into such a number of heterogeneous bodies, that it would be impossible to count them up, and are *we* to blame if the rough materials of dissent have fallen to pieces; and must we be charged with arrogant assumption if we deny to these the name of churches, and consider that they are all but additional rents of the original piece that was torn from the church when schism was first introduced?

The church, after the Reformation, was for many years in perfect union in England; no Popish recusant ventured to oppose the truths that were promulgated by our Reformers,—no puritanical malcontents expressed dissatisfaction at the continuance of some ceremonies that were in use before the Reformation; but all worshipped together at the same altars,—all professed attachment to the same liturgy, and belief in the same creeds. But Popery could not brook that this happy state should continue. She knew that "to divide is to destroy;" and acting upon this maxim, Popish priests assumed the garb of puritanical ministers of the church, and taught that she was only half reformed, and was still the twin-sister of the man of sin. Some of these priests were tried, convicted, and punished; but not until their ends were gained,—dissatisfaction was expressed at the state of the church,—the seed was sown, and in a short time produced the fruit of an open rupture with her; and Popery, and Puritanism, under the presbyterian form of church government, in the same year, 1570, made their appearance in England. And could it be supposed that persons thus cutting themselves off from the fellowship of the church, and forming themselves in a body under a form of church government which had been unknown amongst professing christians for a period of fifteen centuries, should be acknowledged to be of equal authority with the church from which without cause they had withdrawn?

I might mention the origin of other sects; but it is needless to do so, the principle involved in all of them is the same,—they have,

without cause, by their own act, or by the act of their ancestors, cut themselves off from fellowship with Christ's body the Church, and the consequences lie at their own doors. I say nothing respecting their future and eternal state: these things as secret belong to God; and though I must, on the strength of scriptural authority, believe that seditions and heresies (that is, according to Dr. Clarke, divisions into separate factions, parties whether in *Church* or *State*,—parties in the Church separating from communion with each other, and setting up altar against altar,) are equally with adultery, and witchcraft, and murder, works of the flesh, and that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God; yet I would consider that those who have been born in a state of schism, and who have its principles inculcated upon them from their infancy, are not (at least as long as they are in a state of ignorance) in such a dangerous state as those who were the first originators of it, but that they deprive themselves of true Christian privileges for the sake of those which are at least doubtful, and are satisfied with husks when they might obtain the children's food.

The Church universal has never allowed that those who withdraw themselves from her communion and form themselves into separate societies, are equal in authority with herself; such a concession would be alike contrary to reason and to scripture. She has invariably maintained that there is but "*but one body and one spirit*," and that it is her duty to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." She has always believed that it was the desire of the Saviour that his people who believed on him throughout the world should be all one, as he was in the Father and the Father in him—she has constantly taught that the assuming a distinctive appellation such as the Corinthian, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Christ," is destructive of Christian unity and contrary to the principles of Christian love; and in conformity with these scriptural views she declares in the Nicene Creed, first published about 1500 years ago, I believe *One Catholic and Apostolic Church*. How could she therefore consistently say when any withdraw from this one Apostolic Church, that she allows their true ecclesiastical character? Her views on the subject of this unity are expressed by a learned Prelate of our own Church, in a work which is thus described by Mr. Wesley:—"In order to be well acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity you need but one book beside the New Testament, Bishop Pearson on the Creed; this I advise you to read and master thoroughly; it is a library in one volume."—Letter to Mr. Glascott, in *Methodist Magazine* for 1834. After enlarging upon the unity of original, of faith, of the sacraments, of hope and of charity, Bishop Pearson proceeds,—"*Lastly, all the Churches of God are united into one by the unity of discipline and government, by virtue whereof the same Christ ruleth in them all. For they all have the same pastoral guides appointed, authorized, sanctified and set apart by the appointment of God, by the direction of the Spirit, to direct and lead the people of God in the same way of eternal salvation. As therefore there is no Church where there is no order, no ministry, so where the same order and ministry are there is the same Church, and this*

is the unity of government and discipline."—Pearson on the Creed, Art. 9.

The views of the ancient Church may be learned from the following quotations from the Primitive Fathers:—St. Cyprian, A. D. 250,—"Without a Bishop there is no Church." St. Ignatius, A. D. 101—"Let all regard the Deacons as the commandment of Jesus Christ, and the Bishop as the Son of the Father, the Presbyters as the Council of God and Assembly of Apostles; *without these a Church is not named.*"—Epistle to the Galatians. Our Church therefore in accordance with scripture and those plainly expressed declarations of some of the earliest teachers of Christianity, properly considers that those who withdraw themselves from this unity of discipline and government unchurch themselves, and that she is altogether free from censure with regard to them.

I have now only one objection to the Church to consider, or rather an excuse for your non-attendance at its services—namely, that Mr. Wesley was thrust out of the church, and his followers compelled thereby to erect themselves into an independent body. This objection is thus set forth by the Editor of the *Methodist Magazine* for 1837, in reviewing Lord Mahon's History of England:—"On this passage were mark, and this is a point which we shall never give up, that Mr. Wesley did not leave the church; he was shut out of it."—p. 920. From a review of Mr. Wesley's writings I as positively affirm he was not shut out of it, and must therefore look for more convincing proofs than the Editor's bare assertion. Mr. Wesley's own language upon the subject is sufficiently plain:—"Nothing can prove I am no member till I am excommunicated or renounce her communion, and no longer join in her doctrine, and in the breaking of bread and in prayer; nor can anything prove I am no minister of the church till either I am deposed from my ministry or voluntarily renounce her and wholly cease to teach her doctrines, use her offices, or obey her Rubrics for conscience sake."—vol. 8, p. 444. Can the Editor then, or any other individual, shew that Mr. Wesley was legally shut out of the church by excommunication or deposition, or that he was prevented from officiating in any of the Churches of England by episcopal inhibition? "But he was prevented from preaching in many Churches of the Establishment by the ministers of those churches." This is not shutting him out from *the Church*, which is an act that no ordinary minister can perform, no nor yet a Bishop without a legal procedure. But though this language might possibly have been used in the earlier part of Mr. Wesley's career, it was evident from his own language that it could not have been applied to the latter part of his life. "Tuesday, January 19, 1783, I preached at St. Thomas' Church in the afternoon, and St. Swithin's in the evening; *the tide is now turned, so that I have more invitations to preach in Churches than I can accept of.*"—Vol. 4, p. 248.

I say then, Mr. Wesley was not shut out from the Church; but probably the following analysis of his journal may put the subject in a clearer light:—



PERIOD :	No. of Churches preached in.	REFUSALS BY				
		Clergymen.	Municipal Authorities	Military Officers.	Gentlemen.	Total.
From Jan. 1, 1739 to Dec. 31, 1749...	105	12	2	1	1	16
" " 1, 1750 " 31, 1759...	60	1	2	0	2	5
" " 1, 1760 " 31, 1769...	65	0	3	1	0	4
" " 1, 1770 " 31, 1779...	87	3	1	1	0	5
" " 1, 1780 Oct. 24, 1790...	195	5	0	0	0	5
Total.....	521	21	8	3	3	35

The number of churches preached in would most probably be greatly increased if he had been more particular in specifying the places where his services had been held; but by far the greater number of these services are said to have been performed in such or such a town, without mentioning whether they were performed in a Church or in the open air or in one of his own preaching houses.

In conclusion I may observe, that I have endeavoured to make the foregoing remarks in a spirit of Christian charity, and to avoid every expression which might be calculated to wound the feelings of any person amongst you, and I trust they will be received in the same spirit in which they have been written. In investigating such a subject as religion, we should always aim at the attainment of truth, and not permit either prejudice or educational bias to divert our attention from it. It may be that in the foregoing pages some expressions may at first sight appear harsh, but I must request that you will weigh them deliberately before you pass a severe sentence upon them. If I have said that you have formed erroneous opinions respecting the church and her liturgical services, I think I have shewn that such is the case. If I have asserted that you differ from Wesley in discipline and in doctrine, I consider that my assertion has been fully proved. And if I have stated that Mr. Wesley's own practices in some points were opposed to the views of the Primitive Church, the passages from the early Fathers which I have quoted will fully corroborate this statement. Let the truths which I have adduced be candidly weighed, and I think you must acknowledge that you are not walking in the path that Wesley marked out for you, but have gradually diverged from it into a direction which he altogether disapproved of.

Be his followers then, or else give up his name. No longer vilify and traduce that church which with his dying breath he prayed might be attended with the blessing of God. As he enjoined upon you in the rules which are *still* distributed amongst you, attend upon her ordinances and require of those who assume authority over you that in compliance with the direction of your Founder they would make such changes in the hours of your own services as will enable you to attend regularly upon the sacred services in the house of God, and you will

find them to be (as he frequently said that they were) true food for the soul.

But if you are determined still to follow a course which belies your profession, at least permit others to worship God in the way which they think most in accordance with the precepts and practices of the Apostles, without aiming at them the shafts of your misdirected zeal. Seek more of the mind which was in Christ Jesus, that you may in lowliness of mind esteem others, if not better, at least equal with yourselves, and overcome that spirit of self-righteous pride which causes many of you to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think.

Some of you still claim to be Churchmen, and would be very much offended if you were said to have forsaken the faith and form of religious worship of your fathers. Let me address to you a few words of expostulation. You suppose that you can receive spiritual advantage from every form of religious worship, provided that the teachers of these forms only preach Christ. You fancy that you can walk with Methodism and the church, and be at the same time united with both; but can two walk together unless they be agreed, and can there be any union between that church of which you say you are members and any sect that endeavours to prevent her usefulness, to slander her doctrines, and to call out for her destruction? Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, but as I have frequently urged upon you, "prove all things." Examine into the reason why the church claims to be *THE branch of the Catholic and Apostolic Church* planted in this empire, and then "hold fast that which is good." Be genuine devoted and sincere sons of the church, and mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, *and avoid them.*

What superfluity in the ordinances of our church has been taken away, or what deficiency supplied by Methodism? None whatever. Can you not be saved in her without adding to her scriptural services man-made ordinances? If you can, of what value are such ordinances to you? If you cannot, what has become of all who died during the seventeen centuries that had passed away previous to the commencement of Methodism?

I have proved from the writings of Wesley and from the declarations of the church in the purest ages of Christianity, that persons appointed as Methodist Preachers are have no right to administer those sacraments, which are truly scriptural; why then should you forsake "the old way" which has been established by Christ and his Apostles, to unite yourselves with a society that cannot lay claim to an existence of 150 years? Why should you withdraw from those ordinances which can without contradiction claim Christ for their author, to depend upon those which at the best are but of doubtful authority?

Again: why do you make a mock of God in your prayers? You come to his house and desire of Him that he would be pleased to deliver you from "all false doctrine, heresy and schism," and yet with your hands you uphold what with your lips you condemn. Be consistent. Be either Churchmen or Methodists. How can you suppose that God will deliver you from schism, if you yourselves are

maintaining it. If you had a sincere desire that God would hear and answer you, you would endeavour to aim at a perfect correspondence between your lips and your lives, and until such a correspondence is obtained your prayers shall return to you unanswered. You profess to desire unity in Christ's body, the church; but can this unity be obtained by supporting with your influence those who are the authors of confusion, and who strain every nerve to swell their ranks with deserters from the church, for remember that it is by those who fall off from the church that the ranks of Methodism are constantly kept up, and that very few fall to her from sectarian denominations? If then you truly desire that God would deliver his church from schism, as far as you are concerned, do not build it up, but seek the prosperity of that body which we conscientiously believe to be the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth; and may that God who is the author of peace and not of confusion, "take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one body and one Spirit and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart and one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth, glorify him, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I am, my dear Friends,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

JOHN FLETCHER.

Mono, September, 1852.

#### LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

In the postscript to the former edition of these letters, I observed that, "after the manuscript had been placed in the hands of the publisher an excitement was produced in this mission by the introduction of a novel mode of conversion amongst the members of your society, through the medium of protracted meetings and penitent benches. As similar meetings had not been held in this mission since it was placed under my pastoral charge, I made no allusion to them; but lest my silence should be construed into anything like approbation of them, or inability to comment upon them, I unhesitatingly state my conviction that such conversions are unscriptural, that the mode of effecting them is non-Wesleyan, and the results produced by them not permanent." I also stated that "I would reserve my proofs of these assertions to another opportunity." That opportunity has now arrived. I shall therefore at once proceed to bring them forward; and as camp meetings are only protracted meetings on a more extensive scale, and penitent benches used in both, my observations shall have reference to both protracted and camp meetings.

I might cut the matter short, by stating in plain terms that there is not a single passage of scripture which, in the most distant

manner, alludes to such a thing as a penitent bench or a camp meeting, and also that they have not been mentioned in any period of the history of the church, until late in the 17th century. Finney, who is a warm advocate for the "anxious seat," as he terms what is here called the penitent bench, and whose work on revivals seems to be a text book with those who are engaged in them, states that it originated in New England, consequently it could not have been used before the time mentioned.

But the absence of a reference to them in the sacred writings may be considered merely as a negative proof of their unscripturality, I shall therefore consider some of the instances of conversion recorded in scripture, and shall affirm respecting them that they are totally different in their nature from those that are proffered at the penitent bench.

Scriptural conversion is produced by the conviction of the judgment and the reason,—penitent bench conversion, by the excitement of the passions, by a contagious sympathy of feeling, or at the utmost by an alarming of the conscience.

The Jews, on the day of Pentecost and following days, were convinced by the reasoning of Peter and the other apostles that the Jesus whom they had crucified was in reality the Christ, and through their judgment being satisfied and their reason convinced, they were led to accept him as their Saviour. The Eunuch, and Lydia, and the twelve Ephesian disciples, were converted by being plainly pointed to Jesus as the Prophet that should come into the world, without a single expression having been used calculated to terrify or alarm; while Paul and the Philippian jailor, whose conversions were brought about by miracles, had no fearful denunciations of divine wrath declared to them to awaken their consciences; but when the spirit had by his own operations convinced them of the need of salvation, then the messengers of Christ proclaimed peace to the returning penitents, through the blood of Jesus.

In all these instances, the judgment and the reason of the converted persons were fully satisfied, and no hot-bed instrumentality made use of to force them forward into christianity. But compare with the scriptural method of conversion that used by revivalists. A revival is intended to break out in any neighbourhood—preachers are called together from various places—sermons of an exciting character are preached—and while the congregation is under the influence of this excitement, notice is given that a prayer meeting will be immediately held; invitations are given to those who are desirous of going to heaven to manifest that desire by coming forth before the congregation and kneeling at the penitent bench. Who is not desirous of going there? The consequence therefore is that, under the impulse of the moment, some (generally young persons or females) go forward; sometimes however there is a backwardness manifested, when the initiatory step is taken by some prominent individual, and, the ice being once broken, it is easy afterwards to fill the benches. When all are arranged, prayers are offered in such a manner that one would suppose that heaven was about to be taken by storm, and advices given to the supposed penitents amidst the most extreme noise and confusion; when at length, under the influ-

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ence of excited feelings, some one stands up to profess salvation, another and another catches its influence, and all are set down converted.

You may say that I have heightened the description for effect, but I have not. I have fallen short of the reality. I might describe revival meetings in the strongest language, and not reach the true pitch of that confusion which is sometimes to be seen in them, and yet those engaged in them profess to offer worship to that God who willeth that all things should "be done decently and in order," and whose spirit declares that "he is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

As I have never been present at a camp meeting, I cannot from personal observation assert that the accounts of the extreme confusion kept up in them are true in every particular; yet the following extract from the description of one, written by an acknowledged friend, is such as to convince my mind that that God, whose movements are in the "still small voice," and who will not be found in the rumbling of the earthquake or the rolling of the thunder, cannot take pleasure in them. "Some were lying as in the pangs of death, many were as cold as clay and still as if dead, so that among six or seven thousand people there were few comparatively that had the proper use of their bodily powers so as to take care of the rest.  
\* \* \* \* \* In the evening, as many of the mourners were collected as possible, and placed under an arbour. The sight of them was a dreadful resemblance of hell, numbers of poor creatures being in every posture that distressed persons could get into, and doleful lamentations heard comparable to those which we may conceive to be the lamentations of the damned."—*Coke's Life of Wesley*, chap. 3, sec. 2.

Another difference between scriptural and penitent bench conversion is, that in the one there is no limit of time or place put upon the mercy of God; the humble publican may go down from the temple to his own house justified; the gentle Lydia from the river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and praying Paul from the room to which his blindness confined him. But in the other, the grace of conversion can only be received at the house appointed for meeting, and at that part of it where the penitent bench is situated, and during the time when prayer is being offered up for the supposed penitent.

Penitent bench conversion thus differs from that of scripture—in the language used in producing it, in the excitements by which this language is followed up, and in the limitations it puts to the bestowal of God's mercy in the way and at the time which is most pleasing to him.

My second assertion is, that such proceedings are un-Wesleyan. In proving this assertion, I must follow the same strain of argument which I have adopted above, and enquire—Can any person point out in the writings of Wesley any allusion to protracted or camp meetings, or any reference to a necessity for coming forward to a particular part of the chapel to procure the special prayers of the congregation in order to the obtainment of conversion? To this question I shall at once unhesitatingly answer, no. There is not a

single passage in the works of Wesley which can by the most subtle special pleading be perverted to support such meetings or such modes of conversion; for penitent benches and protracted meetings were altogether unknown to Wesley; they are of comparatively recent introduction among the societies of Methodists in the British isles, and camp meetings are as yet unknown there, being altogether an American innovation.

"But if Wesley does not in plain words mention penitent benches, protracted or camp meetings, does he not make use of language which shews that he approves of the spirit manifested in them?" I cannot see any such language used in the edition of his works from which I quote; true, I notice some places where he endeavours to account for and to excuse fainting fits or other nervous irregularities by which members of his congregations were on one or two occasions affected; but the general view that he takes of such innovations as we are now considering may be learned from the following passages from his works: "In former times, whenever any unusual religious concern has appeared, there has sprung up with it a zeal for things that were no part of religion. But it has not been so in the present case; no stress has been laid upon anything, as though it was necessary to salvation but what is plainly contained in the word of God."—Works, vol. 7, p. 426. "Perhaps some may be afraid, lest the refraining from these warm expressions, or even gently checking them, should check the fervour of our devotions. It is very possible it may check or even prevent some kind of fervour which has passed for devotion. Possibly it may prevent loud shouting, horrid unnatural screaming, repeating the same words twenty or thirty times, jumping two or three feet high, and throwing about the arms or legs both of men and women, in a manner shocking not only to religion but to common decency. But it never will check, much less prevent, true scriptural devotion."—Works, vol. 7, p. 295. "Beware of that daughter of pride, enthusiasm! O, keep at the utmost distance from it. Give no place to a heated imagination. Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions, or revelations, to be from God; they may be from him, they may be from nature, they may be from the devil; therefore 'believe not every spirit,' but try the spirits 'whether they be of God.' *Try all things by the written word, and let all bow before it. You are in danger of enthusiasm every hour if you depart ever so little from scripture, yea, or from the plain literal meaning of any text taken in connection with the context.*"—Works, vol. 11, p. 429. Wesley did not thus think that a penitent bench was necessary, for it is one of those things which are not "plainly contained in the word of God." He did not approve of that loud shouting, unnatural screaming and nervous excitement, which are characteristic of the revival meeting; nor did he approve of giving way to imaginations and impressions of the mind, as if they proceeded from God.

My last assertion on this subject is, that such conversions are not permanent.

Having been produced by excitement and the giving way to the passions, when the passions are cooled or the excitement abated the



individual relapses into his former position, until a fresh excitement (the camp meeting of summer, or the protracted meeting of winter) is raised, when he again gives way to the sympathetic feelings of his nature, and appears once more among the number of the converts. Some may, however, appear to remain steadfast; but if we narrowly observe their conduct, we shall generally see that Satan has only changed his tactics, withdrawing his temptations to their former besetting sins, and enticing them, instead of them, to different ones; for example, to slander, hypocrisy, or spiritual pride.

God's ordinary dealings in nature and in providence should teach us a lesson of the method adopted by him in the manifestations of his grace. The work of creation, to which that of the new creation is often compared, was not instantaneous. He that spake and it was done, might by his fiat have spoken the earth and all that it contains into perfect completeness; but he was pleased to act otherwise, first bringing the dry land out of the chaotic mass, afterwards clothing it with verdure; then creating the inferior animals upon it; and finally, stamping it with the seal of perfection by creating man in his own image and likeness. The infant oak requires the growth of years before it arrives at that maturity which enables it for centuries to brave the storms of the tempestuous sky. The embryo offspring of the human family requires the care and attention of years to give him that strength which, with God's preserving care, keeps him in health to his term of three score years and ten; while the mushroom which to-day springs into existence and full maturity, is to-morrow withered and destroyed, and the ephemeris which this morning starts into life this evening dies. From considering the analogy that subsists between nature and grace, we might thus see that mushroom religion is ephemeral in its existence; while the germ of divine grace that has been planted in the heart and watered by the influences of God's spirit, *gradually* increases to maturity, the grain of mustard seed, in the same manner, becomes a tree; and the little children, by progressive steps, become young men and finally fathers.

I shall now draw this task to a conclusion. It has not been by any means an agreeable one to me, for I would gladly keep aloof from the boisterous waters of controversy; but I could not see any portion of the flock which had been placed under my pastoral supervision imitating the example of the Athenians, and hunting after the shadow of some fresh novelty, without raising my voice to call them back to the old paths from whence they were straying.

In doing so, I trust that I have not written in a spirit, or made use of a style of language, unsuited to my position as a minister of Jesus. I have not the slightest desire to give you offence; but as I firmly believe that it is the desire of our Saviour that all who profess to be his disciples should be one—one in spirit, one in discipline, and one in action—one as he is in the Father and the Father in him (John xvii. 21); and as you break this union with the church which he established through his apostles by unnecessarily severing yourselves from it, and the more you diverge from the directions of the founder of your society the more you render yourselves amenable to the charge of schism, I do therefore, from a sincere desire



for your spiritual edification, which can be most fully effected by your adherence to the faith and form of sound words of the apostles, first point you to the scriptures as the means of discovering the old apostolic paths, and then to him whose name you bear, that, walking more fully after the example which he set you, and loving as he professed to do that church, for the prosperity of which his last, his dying prayer was offered, you may approach somewhat nearer to that unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace, which the scriptures so strongly inculcate.

In the preceding pages, I have addressed myself altogether to members of the Methodist society, who, while they profess to be members of the one body, yet present themselves under different phases; some of them being determined enemies of that church in which they were educated, and from which they received their earliest privileges, their first spiritual enjoyments; while others have not gone to the full extent of opposition which these manifest, as they still profess an attachment for the church of their martyred forefathers, while they attempt to go hand in hand with its avowed enemies. To these I have opened my mind with plainness, and I trust in a spirit of christian charity. But there is one class that I have apparently overlooked, but which, equally with the others, requires a few words of friendly admonition. I mean those who are yet sincerely attached to the church, regular attendants upon her ordinances, but who occasionally attend upon the services of the Methodist societies. Bear with me, brethren, while I make a few observations on the impropriety of the course you adopt. I trust that I shall make them in the same christian spirit that I have endeavoured to observe throughout these letters, and that you will receive them with that attention which my position as your spiritual pastor authorizes me to expect they shall receive from you.

The first question that should present itself to your mind, when about to go to a Methodist meeting, is, do the teachings of the Church and those of the Methodist preachers agree? To this question I shall answer, that in some respects they do, but in others they do not. In these latter, then, the church is either correct or incorrect. If she is correct, it is altogether improper and unscriptural to attend upon ministrations that differ from her; while, if she is incorrect in them, it is equally improper to maintain connection with her. You should therefore prove these points, and hold fast that which is good.

The difference between the church and methodism respect either discipline or doctrine. The one teaches that the officers of the church, appointed by the scriptures, and who continue to the present day, are bishops, priests and deacons; the other, that this discipline is not in accordance with scripture. In these letters, I have shewn that the statement of the church on this subject is not only true to the letter, but acknowledged to have been so by the author of methodism; and if the discipline of the Methodists be thus incorrect, which I have also shewn, inasmuch as it was assumed by themselves, without any appointment by those who had authority to give it, their sacramental services, if not absolutely null and void, are at least of doubtful authority. I have also shewn that the

parts of the discipline of methodism that are not practiced by the church are not in accordance with scripture; that bread and water love feasts were unknown to it and to the whole of antiquity, and that class meetings had their origin in a scheme for paying the debt of a preaching house. Methodist discipline being thus contrary to the letter of scripture, or at least unknown to it, are you consistent while you acknowledge it by your presence, and give those who support it the power of referring to your attendance upon it as a proof of your approbation?

Let us now look at the doctrine they teach; in some points it is correct, in others unscriptural. I have shewn this to be the case in respect to the doctrines of regeneration and conversion. But there is another doctrine of equal importance on which they hold equally erroneous opinions—namely, the doctrine of perfection. As they object to the name sinless perfection, I shall not call it by that name, although the principle is the same as if that name were given to it. This doctrine is, that it is possible for us to live upon earth without committing sin. It occupies a prominent position in their sermons and their experiences, either at the love feast or class meeting. It is, however, altogether rejected by the Church, in her 15th Article: "All we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:" and in her 16th, "They are to be condemned which say they can no more sin as long as they live here." Compare with this language the following verse of a hymn found in the Methodist Hymn Book:

"Not all the powers of hell can fright  
A soul that walks with Christ in light;  
*He walks and cannot fall;*  
Clearly he sees and wins his way,  
Shining unto the perfect day,  
And more than conquers all."—Hymn 281, v. 2.

Here then is a direct issue, and that on a most important point. Let us bring it to the test of scripture, and see which statement is incorrect. Read the following passages, and weigh them seriously: "There is no man which sinneth not."—2 Chron. vi. 36. "Who can say I have made my heart clear; I am pure from my sin."—Prov. xx. 9. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not."—Ecc. vii. 20. "In many things we offend all."—James iii. 2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—1 John i. 8. These passages are so plain that they need no comment, and it would certainly require great perversity of judgment to compel us to acknowledge the opposite doctrine. As methodism is false therefore in some of her doctrines, and unscriptural in her disciplinary arrangements, should I be looked upon as deficient in Christian charity if I address you in the language of St. Paul: "I beseech you, brethren, *mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned, AND AVOID THEM.*"—Romans xvi. 16. For "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned. Can a man go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned."—Prov. vi. 27, 28. Or can you associate with those who are compassing sea and land

to make one proselyte, and not receive spiritual damage by drinking into their spirit and imbibing their principles.

Be no longer inconsistent with your profession ; but "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" but "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Study the principles of your church; compare them with the book of God; and the more you do so, the more fully will you be convinced of their truth, and the more grateful to the God of all mercy for causing the lines to fall unto you in pleasant places, for giving you a goodly heritage, even an heritage in the Church of the Reformers, the Church of the Martyrs, the Church of the Apostles, and the Church of Christ.

I am, my dear friends and brethren,

Your faithful servant

In Christ,

JOHN FLETCHER.

Mono, November, 1853.

